

M E M O I R S

OF

M A R Y,

A

N O V E L.

By Mrs. GUNNING.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

V O L. IV.

L O N D O N:

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MEMOIRS

OF

MARY.

[*In Continuation.*]

FOR the first ten minutes nothing could equal the vivacity of Lord Auberry, after which exertion he fell into a kind of dead-alive stupor, something between a waking and sleeping reverie, from which he was disturbed by Mrs. Tovee.

She cried out in her usual quick tone of voice, "Is not this charming? quite charming my Lord? did you ever see any thing so handsome as your Cousin?

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B

"and

“ and then my Lord Duke and my Lady
“ Duchefs are fo fond of her—Well, to
“ be fure, it is quite delightful !”

“ Every thing is charming ! quite de-
“ lightful, as you fay, Madam.”

“ Well but my Lord, pray obferve
“ Mr. Lexington.”—My Lord had juft
“ fwallowed a glafs of wine, and feemed
“ inclined to dofe again.

“ You muft indeed look at Mr. Lex-
“ ington ; did you ever fee any thing fo
“ handsome ? my fon and daughter were
“ juft fuch another couple. Well ! to be
“ fure, there never was fo fine a family
“ as my Lord and my Lady have got.
“ And then they are all fo wife, quite
“ little philosophers : and I hope, my
“ Lord, the Houfe of Cleveland will not
“ want a race of beautiful fucceffors.
“ Well ! to be fure, that would be a great
“ pity.”

“ Excufe me, Madam, if I do not
“ anfwer every one of your queftions with
“ the fame regularity as you ask them ;
“ my

“ my talents for conversation were dipped
“ so deep last night in claret, that I have
“ not yet been able to redeem them.”

“ It is better your talents should be
“ dipped, than your estate (said Mrs.
“ Oxburn), hard will it be indeed if you
“ have not yet enough left unmortgaged
“ to entertain good Mrs. Tovee.”

Good Mrs. Tovee did not hear the compliment intended for her, because she was charming, charming it away, to every other person who sat within the reach of her voice.

Lord Auberry, roused by the rebuke of Mrs. Oxburn, who it was not for the interest of his plans or his pleasure to offend, reassumed his vivacity, and again plied her with those devoirs which were beginning to slacken, or at least had not since they sat down to dinner been sufficiently marked to be much observed, or to make her much distinguished by them; a mortification she could not support with christian patience: the two dearest claims

of a coquette is, to inspire men with admiration, and women with envy.

The ironical attack by which she contrived to awaken his attentions, was followed up by a thousand arch looks and brilliant escapes of wit on both sides; amongst which, Mrs. Oxburn, in a whisper that brought their cheeks in contact with each other, compared the present meeting to a methodist love feast, which next to a christening, or a wedding, she declared to be the greatest nuisance of civil society.

Somehow or other, this jest upon love-feasts, christenings and weddings, produced such a convulsive laugh from the person it was addressed to, that the Duchess, whose head was not fixed on a neck remarkably elastic, and now erected with rather more stateliness than before, said to Mrs. Oxburn—"What is this wit, so
"very diverting to one, and so unenter-
"taining to the rest of my friends—you
"had better give us our share in your
"good

" good things, what is not general, may
" be offensive."

" Oh Lord! (she replied) it is not
" worth your Grace's notice; you know
" I talk all sorts of nonsense."

" La! (said Mr. Thomson)."

" La! (said Lady Rachel)."

" I understand you both extremely well
" (said she, shrinking her shoulders), you
" express yourselves so like my *tender*
" husband, when he wants to get out of
" me what I do not want to tell him,
" that I cannot mistake your meaning;
" but positively——"

" Pray (interrupted the Duchess) let
" us have done with the subject; I am
" perfectly satisfied—your daughter has
" a great deal of wit—but it will not
" always bear the inquisition of critical
" propriety."

" Ah, Duchess! do not be very angry,
" or I am a gone creature—there is some-
" thing in *your* sort of eye-lightening, that
" must bring me to terms.

" I wonder how your Grace came by
" eyes that can do more with such a mad
" cap as I am, than all the tongues in
" the world."

The Duchefs smiled; it was a smile of
perfect reconciliation—" Yes (she replied)
" you certainly are a mad cap, but I be-
" lieve there is no harm in you; and it is
" because you are so very entertaining,
" that I wished to know what you had
" been saying to Lord Auberry."

" Why then I will tell you. Shall I
" my Lord,"—she might as well have
made her applications to king log, for his
Lordship had just taken his last glass from
the second bottle of port that had been
placed at his elbow, and was just retired
within his own thoughts, from which
even the voice, and gentle pressure of
Mrs. Oxburn's hand on his shoulder, could
not recal him for any longer time than
whilst he pronounced these three short
words—as you please: and then he was
off again.

Nobody

Nobody could be more expert at invention than Mrs. Oxburn; but before she had fixed on what sort of lie would be the best substitute for a truth she dared not reveal. Dinner being removed, the Duke called on her to join with the Miss Lexingtons, her brother, and Lord Auberry, in a glee.

This was the most pleasing summons she could now receive; it happened for the first time in her life she found herself plunged in difficulties, without knowing how to get out of them: she would not have hesitated, nor would it have cost her one moment of consideration, to have repeated aloud the very words which were only whispered in the ear of Lord Auberry; but on so interesting an occasion the remark was too ludicrous to gain her any sort of credit, particularly with Lexington—On the contrary, she feared it might in future prove a bar to the designs she had on his heart, which his marriage might, she thought, rather accelerate

than retard; she was glad therefore to lay the jest aside, as a dangerous, if not a fatal experiment on the temper of a lover, who as yet had not divided his affections, though she lived in hopes of seeing them scattered about amongst the women of her own class; and that she should come in for her share of them at least.

Lord Auberry, hearing himself called upon by the Duke to join in the glee, "Drink to me only with thine eyes, and I will pledge with mine;" attempted the bass, but making no hand of it, resigned his part to Mr. Thomson, who finished it with *less* execution than his Lordship could have done, *but* with *more* than he was *then* capable of doing.

The first song being ended, Lord Auberry, who by that time had got himself pretty deep into his third bottle, proposed that they should sing "Sigh no more ladies;" he would try the second part, and was *sure* he should be more successful than in his former effort.

This

This was the first time that the presence of Lord Auberry had called a blush into the cheeks of Miss Montague; it was not a blush of recollection, or of regret, but it was the hasty messenger of surprise—it seemed to announce, that the choice of *such* a song by Lord Auberry, in the *presence* of Miss Montague, had spoken him indelicate, unfeeling. Having modestly exemplified its purpose, it passed back to her heart almost as suddenly as it had flown to her face.

Lady Jane Petworth, not less shocked, and a great deal more offended, at Lord Auberry's effrontery, was the only person to observe the momentary change on the lovely countenance of Mary; her Ladyship said something to the Duchess, who immediately rose to retire; a general move took place, and where in half an hour the Duke and his friends joined the ladies; instead of Lord Auberry returning with them, Mr. Lexington brought his excuses

to her Grace, that he had found himself unwell, and was gone home.

This intelligence was a great relief to poor Mary, who not having observed that his Lordship was disordered by his frequent libations during the time of dinner, dreaded his appearance in the drawing-room, almost convinced that he seriously intended to affront her; she communicated her ideas to the Duchess and Lady Jane; the former laughed at her too apprehensive delicacy, which had taken alarm without the least provocation: “the
“ song (she said) was so generally admired, that it was downright prudery
“ not to think it fit for all occasions; but
“ I remember (continued her Grace), now
“ you put me in mind of it, that Lexington refused to sing it the other
“ night—you are certainly a couple of
“ fools, and too sentimental, I fear, to
“ enjoy the common good things of this
“ wicked world, and in a common style;
“ I appeal to Lady Jane if there was the
“ least

“ least hurt done to you, supposing the
“ poor half intoxicated man had begun
“ and ended the song, that so much
“ offends you, and so much delights every
“ other body.”

“ And is it to me you appeal (replied
“ Lady Jane)? then I shall honestly give
“ my opinion against your Grace, and of
“ course for Miss Montague.”

“ Why, sure, you do not mean to be
“ romantic! however, I shall like to hear
“ what reasons you can advance for this
“ strange decision.”

“ I have only *one* to offer, and *that* may
“ be best explained by the whole tenor of
“ Lord Auberry’s conduct to this dear
“ child; every word that falls from *his*
“ lips on the subject of infidelity, must,
“ in *her* presence, be an insult.”

Lord Francis Lexington now broke in
on the *confidential* communications and ob-
servations that were passing between the
three ladies at a distance from the rest of
the company gathered together in little

snug coveys, in different places, all but the Duke and his nephew; they were gone back to the closet of the former, there to conclude the business, which Lexington's haste to return to his party before dinner, had left unfinished.

The Duchess asked Lord Francis "if he was come to rebuke them for not fitting down to cards."

"No (said he), but to wish you a good night."

"Surely you mean to sup with us."

"Your Grace and Miss Montague must excuse me, this note (he held a paper in his hand, and seemed agitated) obliges me to meet the writer of it."

"I hope it is not a *challenge* (said her Grace, smiling)."

"Of no dangerous tendency at least (replied his Lordship); it is the challenge of a friend, who desires to see me immediately; I suppose on his own affairs, and by his billet they seem to demand dispatch; the reason why I
" would

" would not disappoint him is, that he
" thinks himself under some obligations to
" me *already*, and may want my *further*
" assistance."

" You raise my curiosity, (said the
" Duchess) and must tell me who is this
" protegee of your's."

" Do you remember that about fifteen
" months ago I procured the consulship
" at Lisbon for my old school-fellow
" Jack Mellows."

" Oh! is that the person; I hope the
" poor man does not find his *honors* as
" unsubstantial as Sancho Panca found
" his government good, and so is come
" to make you take them back again."

" Indeed (replied Lord Francis) I fear
" all does not go right; if I can do him
" another act of kindness, it would be un-
" generous to delay the execution of it."

" You may bring him to dine with me
" some day or other before he goes back;
" I like your new fangled gentry of all
" things; and if you get him created a
" baronet,

“ baronet, or a peer, I shall like him the
“ better.”

“ We will talk about that another time
“ (said he) ; at present I am keeping the
“ honest Consul in suspense, the cruellest
“ torture that can be imposed on a fellow-
“ creature; and I should not sleep to-
“ night was I the cause of inflicting it,
“ even on the lowest of my domestics.”

“ For a *great* man you are a *very* good
“ one (said the Duchefs).”

“ This is a sentiment that should be
“ written in letters of gold (said Lady
“ Jane).”

“ How humane, how generous, how
“ noble, is the heart of Lord Francis (said
“ Miss Montague).”

“ But Lord Francis was vanished; his
“ good works were gone with him, and
“ his praises were left behind !”

“ If Hercules, the son of Jove, was di-
“ vided in his choice, when the voice of
“ *Pleasure* inticed him one way, and the
“ calls of *Wisdom* commanded him an-
“ other,

“ other, it will be no bad apology for the
“ indecision of a mere mortal : two roads
“ are before me, and which to take is the
“ question ; if I remain in Grosvenor-
“ square it is *Pleasure* that invites me, *she*
“ presides at the festal board—spreads her
“ language through a wide circle—points
“ the wits of conviviality—peeps on the
“ radiance of mild beauty from the eyes
“ of Mary—and revels with more fervent
“ impressions in those of the transported
“ Lexington.—If, on the contrary, I fol-
“ low Lord Francis, I have no such se-
“ ducing incitements ; the voice of *Pleasure*
“ does not lead me that way, but is
“ drowned by one louder, stronger, and
“ more clamorous than her own—*Wisdom*
“ could not have more prevailing powers
“ on the sons of Jove, than *Curiosity* has
“ over the sons and daughters of men—
“ I feel at this moment, that she has a
“ thousand ways to make herself obeyed ;
“ she pinches, bites, scratches, puts us on
“ the

“ the rack, and tortures us to the last
“ gasp of our expiring patience, if we re-
“ fuse to gratify her eager demands.”

“ *Pleasure* adieu! I leave you in Gros-
“ venor-square—Curiosity draws me away
“ to the *Bath Hotel* in Piccadilly, where I
“ shall find the *noble* Commoner walking
“ up and down the front drawing room,
“ in a paroxysm of fury, *which* the *humble*
“ Consul, who kept close at his heels,
“ turned when he turned, and stopped
“ when he stopped, was *vainly* endeavour-
“ ing to appease.”

The interesting dialogue being somewhat advanced before my arrival, I must leave my ingenious Readers to patch it as well as they can with the thread of their own invention, to that part of the conference which I came just in time to snatch from the womb of oblivion.

“ I tell you, Mellows, *the thing* is im-
“ possible, by G——. It is as *impossible*,
“ as for *this* room, in which I am now
“ standing,

" standing, to run away from under my
" feet, and I know nothing of the mat-
" ter."

" I am grieved—I am sorry, my Lord,
" to be the messenger."

" Tell me not of your grief, or your
" sorrow (fiercely interrupted his Lord-
" ship), say rather that you have been im-
" posed upon; *I tell you the thing is im-*
" possible."

" I have spoken nothing from report,
" my Lord."

" And what *better* authority have you
" for your damned intelligence."

" I have told your Lordship that I
" have been myself at Milan, that I
" went there the very moment I got the
" Abbess's letter, wherein she conveyed
" to me the strange news of Madame
" Felicia's elopement. I could not have
" used more diligence, had my own sal-
" vation been at stake.—This I have had
" the honor of repeating three times, but
" your Lordship will not hear me pa-
" tiently,

"tiently, though I am come straight
"from Italy with no other intention than
"to break the disagreeable tidings to you,
"as gently as the nature of them will
"admit."

"Confusion on your gentleness, and
"ten thousand curses on your negli-
"gence."

Here Lord Francis turned suddenly about, and fixed his fiery eyes on the trembling Consul, with the vengeance of an insulted deity, and the phrenzy of a maniac.

Expecting some personal outrage, the great man's little friend mumbled a few incoherent phrases, almost lost in the distance to which he had involuntary retreated, as the only way to secure his safety.

When the passions are governed by cunning, nothing evaporates sooner than the rage of an angry man, unless it is convenient to indulge it—Lord Francis had been thrown a little off his guard, he had given way to the whole strength of his parental

parental feelings, and suspicions might be formed to contradict his *assumed* character of *guardian* only to Rosina, he therefore went directly up to the ghastly-looking harbinger of evil tidings, with quite another sort of countenance than what he had put on the moment before.

"My *dear* friend (said he)."

My *dear* friend bowed himself to the ground.

"Give me your hand,"—the Consul held it out as a child would have offered it to a cat, which he expected would claw him—"you have seen me *too* much discomposed about a matter in which *I* am no other ways concerned *than* from the *friendship* I bore to the father of *that* girl :—what imprudence has unmanned me—quite unmanned me ! it has made me guilty of violences to which *my* disposition was before a stranger ; it has made me *unjust* to you, and hateful to myself."

The

The *Consul* wiped his eyes at the *great* man's recantation of errors—a bottle of champaign and another of burgundy, was *now* by his Lordship's orders placed on a table by the side of the fire, to which they both resorted—a bumper restored the courage of one party, and seemed to abolish the animosity of the other—*concord* took place of *discord*, and Mr. Mellows was calmly requested to give himself the trouble of once more repeating *those* particulars, which had failed before to gain the *attention* they deserved.

To recapitulate in his own words the Consul's narrative, from the time that he embarked at Lisbon, sailed to Italy, and disembarked at Gravesend, might tire the patience of my most patient Reader; I shall therefore abstract from it such parts only as they may wish to be informed of, and leave the rest to the pen of any other author, who loves to tell long stories better than I do.

The

The first intelligence he got of Rosina's elopement, was from the Abbess of the nunnery in which she had been educated: this epistle being perfectly feminine, was of course not explanatory; the whole of its contents were composed of surmises, exclamations, and inuendos, such as evidently obscured the subject, but could not help to enlighten the dark understanding of Mr. Mellows.

The oftener he examined it, the more his confusion increased; something he saw had happened amiss to the Ward of Lord Francis; the nature of this disaster he could not find out, he therefore took his departure immediately for Italy, to ask what was the matter.

On his arrival at Milan, he went to the house which a few months before he had prepared for the reception of Rosina, *alias*, the Marchioness Felicia, and where he had fixed her establishment.

He found the house shut up, he tried to make himself heard, but nobody answered—

swered—the hour was ten in the morning. He proceeded to the nearest Hotel, and meant to have spoken to the master of it, but the master was gone out—he sent for the mistress; she attended his breakfast table, but could give him no better account of the revolution that had happened in Rosina's family, than that the Marchioness, together with her chaperone, the Countess Mellefond, were gone away very suddenly; nobody knew whither; that they had taken only one woman to attend them, that the rest were all discharged, and most of them still disengaged; one man only having got into another service.

This was all the intelligence the poor Consul could get from the Hotel, and it was next to nothing.

A jeweller, with whom he had laid out some money on his last tour, and also recommended to the Marchioness's future favor, was the next person to whom he applied for better information; here he

was

was wonderfully well received, and quite inundated with acknowledgments—I shall give you, dear Readers, a little more of the *shopkeeper*, than I have done of the *Maitres d'Hotel*.

Our disconcerted countryman having accepted an invitation to repose himself, and prevailed on the obsequious vender of toys to sit down by him, he told him the occasion of his present journey to Milan, the ill success his enquiries had been attended with, and requested that he would communicate all the particulars that appertained to the conduct of the Marchioness, either such as he might have collected from his own observation, or such as might have reached him through the channel of report.

“ *Senior* (he replied, with the gravity
“ of a Senator), you could not have ap-
“ plied to any body more capable, or
“ more ready, than I am to obey your
“ commands.—I shall have the honor to
“ tell you, *Senior*, the Marchioness has
“ been

“ been my very good friend from your
“ recommendation—I have sold the *Mar-*
“ *chionefs*, since her residence at Milan,
“ jewels to a large amount, for which I
“ was honourably paid the day before her
“ unexpected departure. I met several
“ other tradesmen waiting in the anti-
“ room when I went to receive my money,
“ who I suppose were ordered to bring
“ in their accounts as well as myself.”

On being asked, if he then observed any particular preparations going forward, that seemed to imply a sudden removal—
“ On the contrary, every thing (he said)
“ was as quiet, and as silent, as it is
“ within the walls of his Holiness’s palace
“ at Rome.”—“ Did he see the *Mar-*
“ *chionefs*?”—“ No, (he replied, with a
“ note of admiration), he had not that
“ honor; few people were admitted to
“ the presence of the *Marchionefs*; her
“ business was always settled by the Coun-
“ tefs Mellefond, who also discharged his
“ demands”

Mellows

Mellows had been told the two ladies left Milan together, but he might have been misinformed, therefore his next question was, "What is become of the Countess?"

"She was gone with Signora."

"Did he know, or was it known by any body in Milan, the route they had taken?"

"That was a *mystery profound*."

"They *must* certainly have moved with some *eclat*—where had they horses—where carriages for their expedition?"

"The *Signora's* carriages were all left behind at Milan—they disappeared without *eclat*—the travelling equipage was not hired at Milan—nobody could guess from what place it was procured—the elopement had occasioned a great deal of inquiry; nothing could be discovered."

"Were none of the servants who remained behind able to give information?"

“ No, they were all dismissed.”

“ But they *must* have seen *something* going forward ; there must have been *some* reason assigned for their dismissal.”

“ They had received it on various pretences, and were discharged so many days prior to the Signora's excursion, that they saw nothing that could throw any light on the transaction ; the vacancies in the household were often applied for, but never filled up ; some excuse or other put off all who made application. I recommended three myself (said the Jeweller), they were ordered to wait a fortnight ; and before the time was expired, the Signoras had withdrawn from Milan.”

Mellows was a quiet, peaceable, accommodating sort of man, and blessed with as much sangfroid as his neighbours, particularly where his own interest was not very much involved ; he might have listened, and asked questions, without betraying

betraying any great symptoms of anxiety—however, it would be altogether unnatural to suppose, that where his interest with Lord Francis was so deeply at stake, he did not evince much anxiety and much astonishment at so many proofs of art, unequalled by any manœuvring he had ever met with before in the annals of female history: I also conceive, that for one malediction that he called down on the head of poor Rosina, a thousand at least were imprecated to crush that of the Countess, who must have led her inexperienced pupil, and conducted her through the whole labyrinth of mischief.

“ I imagine Signor (said the mortified enquirer) the Marchioness Felicia, since her residence here must have established a very large and brilliant acquaintance; and perhaps amongst some of *them* I shall be able to gain more intelligence, than it seems in your power to give me.”

“ Pardon me (replied the Italian), par-

“ don me, Signor; nobody has the honor
“ to have so much respect for your person,
“ and for the person of Signora, the Marchioness, as myself; and I shall have
“ the vanity to surmise, you can no
“ where be better informed; I know as
“ much of this unexpected *arrangement*
“ as any man or woman in Milan, or its
“ environs.”

“ Can you tell me then if the Marchioness had a *favourite* lover, with
“ whom it is possible she might have made
“ her *elopement*?”

“ Every man who *saw* her was her *lover*,
“ but it is presumed none of them were
“ successful; her own woman, to whom
“ I had the honor to present a toy on the
“ Signora’s birth day, had the goodness
“ to tell me, the Marchioness possessed
“ *too* much dignity to feel *la belle* passion
“ for the finest Signor in Italy.”

“ Were there many of them that visited
“ at her house?”

“ Her

“ Her *femme-de-chambre* says no, that
 “ those who were admitted, came to visit
 “ the Countess and Signora; the Mar-
 “ chioness seldom shewed herself in their
 “ *conversaziones*.”

“ But the *ladies* of Milan, I suppose,
 “ visited her with *less* restraint.”

The Italian smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head—“ At *first* (said
 “ he), they had the honour to shew her all
 “ manner of respect, she was asked at all
 “ their *parties*; but finding themselves
 “ over-looked when the Signora was pre-
 “ sent, she was banished from their so-
 “ cieties.”

“ And of what did they accuse her?”

“ Are not *all* Signora's in all countries
 “ like *our* own (smiling and shrugging
 “ more significantly than before); is it not
 “ *sufficient* grounds for accusation, to be
 “ *more* charming, *more* amiable, and more
 “ beloved than themselves—I have the
 “ honour to give you this information,
 “ from my own observation, having heard

“ much conversation on the subject from
“ the Signoras who frequent my shop,
“ by whom I could find out, that when
“ their doors were shut against the Mar-
“ chioness, other reasons were assigned
“ for her exclusion—they pretended to
“ have found out that *she* did not support
“ her own state, *but* that it was supported
“ at the expence of *certain* condescensions.
“ —Signor, do me the honour to say, if
“ I have made myself understood?”

“ I do not understand you—be so good
“ to explain *what* you mean by *certain*
“ condescensions—to construe them into
“ the language of *my* country, they would
“ bear an *infamous* meaning.”

The Jeweller paused—he did not know whether it was best to retract or proceed; but the same enquiry being made with increasing warmth, he confessed, with a great many more words than I am inclined to make use of, that the *ladies* of Milan, who were first on the most intimate footing of friendship with the Marchioness,

chioneſs, had *pretended* to diſcover—that ſhe was an *impoſtor*, and the miſtreſs of a rich man, who had *preſumed* to palm her off as a woman of birth, fortune, and honour.

At firſt, the agitated Conſul was much alarmed, leſt ſhe might have brought on herſelf the odiums that the *ladies* of Milan had placed to her account, but having heard to an end of this marvellous fabrication, he fully acquitted her, as nobody in the world could know better than he did, how groundleſs *theſe* reports were.

Had he entered a little deeper into this myſtery, and aſked the name of a protector ſo munificent, *his own* would certainly have been ready to answer the inquiry; in fact, he was himſelf the reputed liberal lover; and ſo far from thinking the *imputation* of ſuch an amour would be *offenſive* to a man, old enough at leaſt to have been grand-father to Roſina, the Italian might have *ſuppoſed* he was paying
C 4 his

his *court* by the most acceptable of all flattery.

Having got all that he supposed he could get out of the Jeweller, Mellow made his bow, and departed.

His pursuit did not end here—he continued in Milan many days, visited the convent, from whence he had got the first disjointed intelligence of Rosina's escape from Milan—the superannuated Abbess could only cross and bless herself—but knew nothing more of the matter—the police was next applied to, it assisted him in his researches, but to as little purpose—when all was done that could be done, on summing up the total of his enquiries, many of the Jeweller's hints were confirmed, relative to the envy Rosina's charms had excited amongst her fair neighbours; but on the strictest investigation, neither her motives for withdrawing, to what place she had withdrawn, or by what means pursued her journey, could not be discovered; however, by the
over-

over-ruling influence of his friendly planet, he did not once hear himself named as the Marchioness's *chere amie*, though nobody scrupled to tell him, she *was* actually supported by a *Protector* of that description.

Like a skilful gardener I have lopped from the spreading vine of Mr. Mellows's narrative, all the heavy superfluous wood, and left nothing but fruit bearing branches:—I have crammed as much into the compass of ten minutes reading, as, in the second stage of repetition, has engaged the great man, and the great man's friend, from half past nine, till the church clock of St. James's parish struck eleven.

To develope the thoughts of Rosina's father when in possession of all the information he could substract from the particulars laid before him, would be attended with the same difficulty, as if I were to attempt finding out the longitude; and it may also be as easy to fix Mercury, or catch a shadow as it passes, as to tell you

of what colour or complexion were the thousand agitating confused mutilated ideas, that succeeded each other in his distracted and subtle imagination.

Utterly unable to talk any longer on the subject, he did not even say whether he was satisfied or dissatisfied with the Consul's late voyage to Italy; desired to see him the next morning, when he should have considered what was further to be done, and wished him a good night.

Lord Francis had dismissed his chariot at the Bath Hotel; he therefore walked home with one *solitary* hope to give him light in the gloomy retrospection of worldly disappointments—his nephew was *only* on the *eve* of marriage, the engagement may be broken—his daughter may have preserved her *freedom*, though her *reputation* was forfeited—whilst there is life, there will be hope—it is a vigorous principle, it sets the head and the heart at work, and animates a man to do his utmost—it had all its usual effects on the crafty
parent

parent of Rosina, he fancied it was not impossible that the darling wish of his ambition might in time be accomplished in defiance of all present obstacles.

In aid of these distant prospects, he called to his recollection the great *capability* of Mr. Andrew Solemn, in extricating his friends out of difficult situations, which do not run exactly in the straight line of conscience.

Mr. Solemn, a learned lawyer—his good friend—one with whom he intrusted a great deal, though not the *whole* of his confidence; proud of his Lordship's friendship, and rich in other substantial proofs of the high price at which his abilities were rated, had hinted in the warmth of his zeal, that *he* should soon undertake a cause for Sir Ashton Montague, which might eventually further the wishes of Lord Francis.

Contemplations, such as these, brought him to the door of his own house—I shall leave him to enter alone, for *there are a*

fort of people that I do not like to follow into *retirement*, where I am sure they can command no better companions than their own *miserable* reflections.

The key is found—the cabinet is opened—my wits are exhausted—my memory fatigued—and here I unfold the first letter that presents itself, as having the best claim to precedence in the *Memoirs of Mary*.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

Lady Jane Petworth to Miss Beaully.

April 13, 17—

MY DEAR NIECE,

THE contents of my letter to Lady Auberry will explain to you what a sad revolution has happened in our affairs, and cast a cloud over our best prospects.

I have not given the stroke that must wound her peace, and kill the dearest of her hopes, with a *steady* hand or *unfeeling* heart, but it is to conceal what would afflict her more than all the rest, that I write to you only of my unceasing alarms for the health of our beloved Mary.

She is certainly very unwell. I shall not be easy till I have brought her back
to

to Riverdale; but as long as the good Duke continues to breathe, or at least to keep his recollection, there will be no moving her from him—at present his senses are not impaired, and he is unhappy if she leaves his bedside for ten minutes: the Duchess too, seems to draw all her comfort from the same source, but whilst she is administering to their consolation, the dear creature is herself so altered, by surprise and fatigue, that I live in hourly expectation of her being seized with some violent disorder, that may be too strong for her delicate constitution to sustain: I would not have Lady Auberry know how ill she looks for the world.

I account as well as I am able, in my letter to her Ladyship, for the silence of Miss Montague. My excuses, though natural, are so short, that I suspect it will require much of your rhetoric to give them force.

I have

I have entered very explicitly into all the particulars of this strange mysterious business; it was a task too hard for the dear Mary to perform, but she desired that her grandmother might have every thing explained to her, so as to satisfy her as amply as if she had been a spectator of the whole transaction.

I shall send Miss Fortescue back to her parents; she has lost my confidence; I like her no longer; she is more than ever with the haughty Marchioness, and her envious daughters; it is easy enough to see that her pretended sympathy for Miss Montague is a forced sentiment. I am sure she is false, and will have nothing more to do with her.

I need not charge you to keep up the spirits of Lady Auberry, she has been too often the patient victim to every species of misfortune, to fill us with fears now that she is called upon to support an inferior disappointment; for after all,
it

it does not deserve to be named by any stronger appellation.

Adieu, my dear Anna; Miss Montague will write in a day or two, and you shall soon hear again from your truly affectionate aunt,

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auberry.

April 12, 17—

DEAREST of all dear friends, your charming grand-daughter deposes me as her historian to make you acquainted with *some*, not very flattering circumstances, that have lately taken place in our little department; and *others*, of a more melancholy nature, in which the excellent Duke of Cleveland is principally concerned—he is ill—I fear too he is in danger, and yet he is the only person who is not penetrated with grief at the fate that seems to await him.

His Grace has been visited by another stroke, the last perhaps he will be permitted

mitted to receive: he is so fond of Miss Montague, that he will not let her escape from his bed-side long enough to give your Ladyship a very *extraordinary* detail, and of some length which must of course surprise; *but* when every thing is considered, cannot seriously afflict you.

Was I writing to any other woman except Lady Auberry, and held a rod of disappointment over her head before I let it fall, I might have been tempted to preach in the usual canting phrase of Job's comforters on the benefit of patience; but here *my* talents, if I have any for preaching, are entirely useless; it would be an insult, worse than was offered to that man of many sorrows, was *I* to teach the lesson of resignation to *her*, who is already the very best pupil in the school of resignation, of which I am hardly worthy to be appointed door-keeper.

Whoever had looked in upon us three days ago, for I now almost live in Grosvenor Square, might with much appearance

ance of truth, have ventured to pronounce us the happiest little party, within or without the pale of fashion.

Love—harmony—confidence—and fidelity, seemed to have made their *residence* with us; every thing was *en train*, and Hymen stood on the tip-toe of expectation, ready to perform his office—but of all these matters Miss Montague has been informing you for the last fortnight; I wish I was not obliged to reverse the scene—oh! what a catalogue of vexation would it have spared me.

The day before yesterday, which was Thursday, the Duke went to the drawing-room, and received a very gracious compliment from their Majesties, on the approaching marriage of his nephew; many enquiries were made about your Ladyship and Mary—just praises bestowed on your charming grand-daughter. Lexington, though a good subject is a bad courtier; he got himself excused from attending his Grace, because he preferred going with
the

the Duchefs, Mifs Montague, and myfelf, to Richmond; he drove her in his cur-ricule; her Grace and I went in the Duke's chariot.

The morning was remarkably pleasant, and we loitered about in the garden fo long, that when we returned to town, it was too late for Henry to go home and drefs before dinner—" You may ftay as
" you are (faid the Duchefs), you will fee
" nobody but thofe you dine with every
" day, who think they have a right to
" the run of my table, becaufe they are
" fometimes neceffary to my amufe-
" ment."

" I fhall certainly do fo (he replied,
" with a gay air), fince I have *your* per-
" miffion. Lady Jane will have no ob-
" jection, fhe is too reasonable not to
" confefs that a man can *occasionally* be
" entertained more advantageoufly than
" in making his toilet."

His eyes beaming with affection, were directed to Mary; fhe fmiled.

" It

" It does not signify, Miss Montague,
" what *you* think about the matter, the
" *worst* look you can put on will not
" *frighten* me; and the more you practice
" your *witchcraft*, the more determined
" you shall find me not to quit my post."

" Dear Mr. Lexington, how can you
" suppose I want to get rid of you? I am
" sure your dress is extremely well."

" *Dear Mr. Lexington* (repeated he with
" transport)! *dearest* Mary did you mean
" any thing more by *that* "Dear Mr. Lex-
" ington," than merely as if you had said,
" dear me—or, dear heart—or, dear friend
" —or, oh dear?"

The Duke just then returned from St. James's, he told us all what had been said to him; and I do not believe I ever saw him in such spirits, or look so well, in my whole life before.

He then examined his nephew, as to the manner in which he had been disposing of his time; " I am sure (said he)
" you

“ you have not bestowed any part of it
“ upon your outward adornments.”

“ Indeed I have not (he replied), and I
“ will tell your Grace how it happens,
“ that you find me just as you saw me at
“ your earliest levee: I have had the
“ honor to escort my Aunt and Lady
“ Jane to Richmond; Miss Montague
“ insisted on going with *us*, and that I
“ should drive her in the curricule.”

“ Lord bless me, what are you talking
“ about (cried Mary)! you are certainly
“ gone distracted!”

“ Don’t be always (interrupting me),
“ Miss Montague; but suffer ~~me~~ to tell
“ my uncle, that when I came back, I
“ would have gone home, and made my-
“ self fit to set down at table, but *you* pre-
“ vented me—“ I am so soon to take you
“ for *better* for *worse*, it is of no conse-
“ quence in the world, whether your hair
“ is powdered, or not powdered, you
“ are equally *dear* to *me* in this *old* coat
“ and

“ and half boots, as if you had on the
“ finest drefs in the world.”

“ And did I fay this ?”

“ To be fure you did ; or if not, you
“ *ought* to have faid it, which amounts
“ exactly to the fame thing.”

I repeat part of this lively converfation which paffed before dinner, to fhew your Ladyfhip there was at leaft no depression on his fpirits at that time ; he now always fits next to her at table ; his humour diverted every body, his gaiety rather increafed than diminished ; and as to his tender attentions, they hitherto have been invariable.

The firft courfe was removing, when his own fervant who had not waited at dinner, came into the room and delivered him a fealed note ; he thruft it into his pocket, and probably would have thought of it no more, if Mifs Montague had not put him in mind of his omiffion juft as he was following us into the drawing room, there being no gentlemen

men to detain the Duke or him after we retired.

He withdrew to a window, opened the note, and seemed to examine the contents more than once; then taking up his hat, said he must banish himself for half an hour, and when he came back, he would *perhaps* tell us the occasion of his short absence.

We soon after set down to cards, there were only players enough to form two parties; your grand-daughter never sits down if she can help it; however, there was one wanting at *casino*, and she good-naturedly consented to make up the deficiency. I happened to be her partner, and she played very well, till the little musical clock, which stands over the mantle piece, struck ten. Mr. Lexington had been gone near two hours. Mary kept her eye upon the door, and I lost my money.

At twelve, supper was announced; no Lexington appeared.

I love

I love early hours, and do not tempt myself to keep late ones by sitting down to table in any body's house after eleven; the Duchefs knows my rule, and never importunes me to break through it. Your lovely child went with me as far as the outer room—"I wonder," said she, "what is become of him!"—All the reply I could make her was, "Don't be uneasy, my dear—I dare say he will be able to give a good account of himself to-morrow."

I certainly did not feel shocked, nor indeed very much surprised, that he was not returned before I came away; yet I had a disagreeable sensation hung about me, for which I was unable to account—I got no quiet sleep the whole night, and the next morning went before my usual hour to inquire what news there was of the truant. I found the family assembled together except *him*, who I was most anxious to see; and by a single glance on the most ingenuous of all ingenuous countenances, I discovered

that Miss Montague was not in a state of less suspense than when I left her the preceding evening.

“ Lady Jane (said the Duke), have you
“ seen any thing of Lexington to-day ?”

“ No (said I), on the contrary—his half
“ hour being fairly out, I expected to have
“ found him with your Grace.”

“ This conduct is mighty odd (observed
“ the Duchess), I do not *half* understand
“ it; surely it is treating *Miss Montague*
“ with very little consideration, and our-
“ selves with as little ceremony.”

Lord Francis, who was standing with his back to the fire when I came in, now moved to a chair next her Grace—he is ever ready to conciliate any little dissensions which happen to fall in his way, and seldom fails to affect his purpose, so great are the powers of his persuasive eloquence. He said, on the present occasion, “ that
“ though he could not acquit his Nephew
“ of *heedlessness*, in not sending his apologies
“ for breaking through his engagement last
“ night ;

“night; yet, on the score of the offence
“*itself*, he was sure her Grace, who was
“always rational, would find, in the *present*
“conduct of young men much in the world,
“and of a *certain* rank, that sort of excuse
“which would entitle poor Lexington to
“her forgiveness.”

“I shall not trouble myself about *him*
“(she retorted, with much displeasure);
“but, if I was *Miss Montague*, I never
“*would* forgive him.”

“*Then*, I think, my good Sister, *Miss*
“*Montague* would be to blame. Beautiful
“and amiable as she is—even *Miss Mon-*
“*tague* must not expect *but* that her
“lover will sometimes forget his *own* hap-
“piness, and partake with those who are
“*less* fortunate, in the *foibles* incident to
“young men of fashion—this town is full
“of temptations, and if he has fallen into
“*some* of them, he may be subject to our
“displeasure; but let him not incur *absolute*
“condemnation.”

Mary did not speak; yet her sweet eyes, that have a language peculiar to themselves, thanked Lord Francis with eloquent softness for pleading the cause of his Nephew.

Not so the Duchefs—she had no notion of these *nice* distinctions, they were vague and idle—*punishment* was the consequence of *offence*—at least they would never be divided in *her* distribution of justice—Miss Montague might do as *she* pleased—she did not want to govern *other* people any more than to be *governed* herself.

Your Grand-daughter, the liquid lustre of her eyes encreased by the enthusiasm of sentiment, now rose from her seat; and going up to her angry Grace, she said, in a voice impregnated with the tones of peace and full of intreaty, “No; you do not
“*wish* me, I am sure *you* do not wish me,
“to be *displeased* with Mr. Lexington;
“nor can you be *very* long displeased
“with him yourself—I will venture to
“predict, that the moment he comes in
“he

“ he will be forgiven—indeed, indeed,
“ dear Duchefs, it is *impossible* to be angry
“ with Mr. Lexington.”

“ You are a little fool,” was all the
reply.

The Duke, who had been walking about
the room silent, and apparently vexed,
hearing her the advocate of Henry, stop-
ped, and putting his arms round her with
the affection of a Father, “ Charming
“ pleader (said he)—Duchefs, it is not in
“ nature that you should resist so lovely, so
“ candid, so disinterested an advocate.”

“ I don’t know (returned she, with a
“ relenting smile,) but that, on *her* account,
“ I *may* pardon him, if he is able to make
“ any decent defence when he does come—
“ Why don’t you send for him, Duke?”

“ I have done that already (he replied),
“ and expect him every moment (a servant
“ appeared at the door)—Oh! here is the
“ messenger returned—What word have
“ you brought from my Nephew?”

"Mr. Lexington, your Grace, was not at home?"

"How long had he been gone out?"

"He did not come home last night, your Grace—the ladies bid me say, they were afraid some accident had happened, and should be here presently."

The man withdrew—his Grace stood in a posture of consideration—the Duchess said, "Is *this* a man to be *forgiven*?"—Lord Francis smiled, and muttered something not much in disfavour of *fashionable levities*—Miss Montague turned pale, she was sure that the Miss Lexingtons were in the right, and that some misfortune must have happened to him.

Miss Lexington, followed by Maria, rushed that instant into the room, and really they did look very much terrified—their first questions were a perfect duet—"Oh, Uncle! oh, Duchess! what is become of my Brother?"

The person *most* interested in the fate of *this* Brother was not considered by either
of

of them, though her presence, had they been, like her, endowed with the divine gift of female softness, would have retained the violence of their emotions, whether *real* or *feigned*—but *she* was totally disregarded; and they went on, supposing him to be massacred, murdered, and mangled, with as little feeling, as if your Granddaughter had not been in the smallest degree interested in his safety. The dear child was so much terrified by their unnatural suggestions, that, laying her head on my bosom, she almost fainted in my arms.

The Duchess sent her bottle of salts to me by Maria; and said to them both, “ I
“ with you were possessed of a little more
“ *consideration*—there is nothing I hate so
“ much as these sort of *affected* terrors—
“ you may think they are very pretty; but
“ *Misses* are often subject to mistake as to
“ what does, and what does not, become
“ them—we should all have given you
“ credit enough for your *sisterly* affection,
“ if you had not made this mighty fuss

“ about it. You see the consequence, Miss Montague has not yet caught the *plague* of affectation, and you have half killed her with your *outrageous* clamour.”

I felt, and will acknowledge it, a great deal of ill-natured delight at the well-timed rap she had given them over the knuckles; for I *know* they *love* Miss Montague as much as they do their *prayer-book*, or as much as all the girls of their *own* stamp do in general love her—If I had doubted it before, the *pert* answer returned by Miss Lexington, and the silent expression of disdain that clouded her sister's countenance, would have been an infallible direction to *that* private drawer of their hearts, where envy, hatred, and malice, is usually locked up to serve their private purposes.

Your gentle Mary had heard the well-earned rebuke as plain as I did—no particular softness of voice attended the delivery; but on her it produced quite another effect than it did on me, and ill as they deserved

served her *gracious* pity, her fears for Lexington were lost in her apprehensions that she had been the *innocent* cause of his sisters being brought into disgrace.

She recovered herself in a moment—raised her head from my bosom—went up to the *hardy-disposed* girls—her soul overflowing with the milk of human kindness—and begged their pardon with as much submission as if she had *really* given them offence; tried to persuade them out of *their* fears, when her *own* were almost insupportable, and to comfort them, *who* was herself in *much* greater need of being comforted.

Such, my revered, my incomparable friend, was our *general* situation, when one emotion of joy elated all our hearts at the sight of Lexington himself.

Every body now seemed ashamed of their late alarms, and were inclined, I thought, to conceal them from *his* observation—all, except the Duchess, who, rising, walked with great state half way

down the room to meet his advances, and addressing him with much dignity — “ I “ hope, Mr. Lexington,” she said, “ you “ do not find yourself *incommoded* by your “ last night’s irregularities.”

“ Not the least, Madam; the *company* “ in which I passed it was so agreeable, so “ *much* to my own taste, so full of *infor-* “ *mation*, it is impossible I could in any “ manner be *inconvenienced* from their so- “ ciety.”

“ But I suppose in this good company “ you contrived to get drunk?”

“ No; I was only intoxicated with “ happiness.”

“ I do not believe you, Henry — your “ *pale* face and trembling hands tell me “ *quite* another tale. If I do forgive you, “ and if your Uncle is not seriously of- “ fended, you are to make your acknow- “ ledgments to Miss Montague.”

“ No,” said he; “ for *Miss Montague* “ must make *her* acknowledgments to “ me.”

Oh!

Oh! what an enchanting smile did the beloved Mary bestow upon him: she had been so accustomed to his ironical manner of signifying his affection, and approved the *elegant* substitute so much more than *studied* declarations, that she did not perceive any thing extraordinary in his words or his manner.

“Well,” continued the Duchefs, “you have certainly behaved extremely *ill*, and if she does pardon you, it is *more* than I should do.”

He made no answer, but turned to the Duke, who also reprimanded him pretty severely. He next spoke to me, and asked if *I* was as angry with him as the rest of his *friends*? — said something to Lord Francis, who shook him very heartily by the hand—took notice of both his *sisters*—Not a word all this time to your Granddaughter; he did not even cast his eyes towards her, but threw himself into a chair: the hat he held in his hand fell to

the ground, and he violently kicked it from him with his foot.

I saw his *pointed* neglect of the *now* really-agitated charmer was sinking deep on her spirits; her colour changed every moment. I said, "What is *that* ring on your finger?" — I took her hand, as if to admire it, though I had seen it a hundred times before — I wished to make *her* comprehend me, but not to draw the attention of *others* to witness her evident confusion—her hands were as cold as ice—I gently pressed them—she returned the pressure, and whispered, as she hung down her head as if to point out something about the ring, "Good God! what can be the matter?"

"*Nothing* is the matter, my love," I re-whispered. "Don't you see he is half asleep?—He denies that he has drank to hurt himself; but I am convinced he is only just now risen from his bottle—*all* will be well presently."

I thought

I thought exactly as I spoke, and my opinion seemed a pretty general one: every body looked at him, and the smile that passed over their faces explained what they supposed to be his situation.

He had crossed one leg over the other, thrown his head back on the chair, and his eyes were closed.

The Duke fell so completely into the same error with me, that he was advising him to go home and refresh himself with a few hours sleep, when in came *flauntingly*, and ready to coquette with the first man who should happen to cross her, the odious blot of her sex, and the detestation of all *modest* young women, Mrs. Oxburn.

I cannot tell for what, but the Duchess spares this *bold* creature more than she does any other person who comes to the house; I believe it is because she dreads being turned into ridicule, which must be the fate of a *divinity* who is not well with her; and I have known instances when *even* her Grace is not *spared*, with all the
pains

pains she takes to avoid it, in any other place but under her *own* roof.

“ Bless me, good people (cried she),
“ what can you be all doing in such a
“ tremendous *family circle*; you put me
“ in mind of a christening—or a wed-
“ ding—or a funeral: oh; aye, it is a
“ *funeral* sure enough, and *here* is the
“ *corpse*—Are you *quite* dead indeed Lex-
“ ington?” She took up his hand, then let
it go again; it actually fell by his side
as if he had really ceased to breathe—
“ Alas poor Yorick! (she exclaimed) it
“ is all over with him; why don’t *you*
“ come Miss Montague, and try if *your*
“ beauty and accomplishments cannot bring
“ about a resurrection?”

In a moment, all the languor of grief
was banished from Mary’s cheeks, which
were now suffused with a blush of resent-
ment, and she answered with that native
dignity, that spirit of propriety, that
chastened and true wit, which so infinitely
becomes her——“ Your application to

“ *me*

" *me*, Madam, is extremely absurd; the
" case of Mr. Lexington must be desperate,
" if all *your* pains are ineffectual—
" had I any *supernatural* powers, they
" should be exerted in your service,
" because I should think it more to my
" honour to effect a *reformation*, than a
" *resurrection*."

" You called for it (said the Duchess),
" and I am glad she has not disappointed
" you."

" It does but *increase* my debt of *gratitude* (replied the audacious Dame), and
" will only make me the *more* indefatigable to pay *her* what I owe—I never
" permit myself to remain *long* under *such*
" sort of obligations."

Lexington, who appeared neither to have seen or heard any thing since he had put himself into an attitude of repose, suddenly started on his feet, and I thought was coming towards that side of the fire where I was sitting with your Granddaughter; but he stopped short, then retreated

treated to the chimney, and stood with his back to the grate. I watched his motions attentively, for now I began to see there was something more at the bottom of his strange behaviour, than could be accounted for by the conviviality of his last night's frolic.

A little fox dog, who, taking advantage of the door being opened to admit a *less* respectable *animal*, had, unobserved, followed Mrs. Oxburn into the room—just as she had finished her impertinent speech, it crept out from under its master's chair, where it had taken shelter, came fawning towards him, couched at his feet, and at last attracted his notice.

“ I think you are fond of that dog (said Lord Francis), wishing, I suppose, to call him off from his fullen fit of contemplation.

“ You are not mistaken (he replied with vivacity), I am fond of *all* created beings who love *me*, and are *faithful* to me; this creature *pretends* to no more
“ than

“ than he *feels*, and would not forsake *me*
“ for any *other* master in the kingdom—
“ but well thought of my Lord (starting
“ from his subject) it this moment recurs
“ to me, that soon after I came from the
“ Continent, you said you should take a
“ trip *there* yourself early in the spring;
“ pray have you settled your time, and
“ marked out the route by which we are to
“ proceed?”

“ *We?*” (repeated Lord Francis)—I cannot conceive why he should look delighted, but *delighted* he certainly *did* look.

“ Have you forgot then that *I* am to
“ be your companion” (retorted Lexington).

“ But *that*, my dear boy, I have *since*
“ understood was *conditional*,” and he directed his eyes full at Mary.

“ *Conditional* or *unconditional*, my Lord,
“ I have *no* arrangements *now* on *this* side
“ the water, that will prevent my fulfilling
“ my engagement to you—you will find
“ me

" me ready to attend you in half an hour—
" but if you cannot get ready so soon, I
" shall wait till you can come up to me in
" Paris."

Inspiration only can give your Ladyship any idea adequate to the confusion now written by the finger of astonishment, in characters of white and red, on the face of every electrified auditor.

Before I proceed on this marvellous explanation, you will want to be informed how the darling of your maternal heart sustained a shock, so calculated to wound, at the same stroke, her *affections*, and her *pride*—I shall tell it you presently—I shall assure you with the strictest truth, that whatever were her *internal* feelings, and *I know* they were *exquisite*, she had so much command over her passions, as to appear by far *less* interested in the determination of her *ungrateful*, unmanly lover, than any one person present.

You

You ask if he had the assurance to look towards her—yes, he did look towards her, but it was the glance of a thief, and when he thought nobody observed the tract his eyes had taken; and even then his stubborn countenance underwent no change. I fancied it said, *My heart is callous towards you*; and yet I am certain, with all his affected *nonchalance*, her soft, but spirited composure, must have pierced his soul with a thousand daggers.

You are not to suppose the Duke or Duchess remained silent; I only put them by to speak to you of your divine Grand-daughter; the horror with which I beheld Lexington after he had made his *odious* speech to Lord Francis, was sufficient, I thought, for any mortal feelings; but they were infantine compared to what were expressed by those *guardians*, who, I must confess, are worthy of the *precious* trust confided to *their* protection.

I shall

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You are not to suppose the Duke or Duchess remained silent; I only put them by to speak to you of your divine Grand-daughter; the horror with which I beheld Lexington after he had made his *odious* speech to Lord Francis, was sufficient, I thought, for any mortal feelings; but they were infantine compared to what were expressed by those *guardians*, who, I must confess, are worthy of the *precious* trust confided to *their* protection.

I shall

I shall say nothing of the Duchess's words, *they* were hardly intelligible; her Grace was *so* very violent, that as she lifted up her hands, I protest, had they fallen on the treacherous Henry, it would have been no more than I expected—the Duke was less agitated, but his *suppressed* anger was a thousand times more terrible, and may perhaps in the end prove of fatal consequences to himself.

“ Have I heard right, *Sir* (said he, “ going close up to Lexington, and looking sternly at him) *or* have I only “ dreamed that you was a scoundrel ?”

“ Oh! for God sake (said your beautiful, interesting Mary, rising and catching hold of his Uncle's hand), for God sake, “ my dear Duke, do not speak so *harshly* “ to Mr. Lexington, I am *sure* he is not “ to blame: I am *sure* he must have “ very sufficient reasons for his conduct, “ though it may not be proper to explain “ them.”

“ Never

Never shall I forget the look with which Henry surveyed her ; it was agony, it was *despair*, it was *madness* ; but it was gone in an instant ; and he made *this* remarkable answer, with a firmness of voice, inconsistent with his deranged appearance.

“ I *thank* you, Miss Montague (said he), your observation is a good one—
“ I *have* reasons, and I will *not* declare
“ them—nobody in the world knows better *than* Miss Montague, that *I am* a
“ man of *honour*; and *no* scoundrel.”

“ Go back, my love (said the Duke),
“ till I have forced this *headstrong* boy to
“ do *you* justice ; don’t be alarmed, child,
“ (for he saw her delicacy had misapprehended *his* meaning)—it is no longer my
“ intention to make him your *husband*; he
“ is infinitely *now* below your consideration ; but I will make him confess from
“ *what* motive it is, that he *has* injured
“ you by this *daring* insult.”

“ *That,*

“ *That*, my Lord, is not in your
“ Grace’s power—because it is not in my
“ *own* to give you the satisfaction you
“ require.”

Mary returned to her seat by me, and
said softly, “ Would to God I had never
“ left Riversdale.”

“ *You and I* Lexington (continued the
“ Duke), *must* understand each other bet-
“ ter than we *seem* to do at present. I
“ should not from *choice* have entered on
“ *such* a subject as this, in so *public* a man-
“ ner—particularly before a *person* pre-
“ sent, who is not by relationship in-
“ terested in the affairs of *my* family—
directing his looks to Mrs. Oxburn, who
would *not* take any hint that must drive
her from a scene the most *entertaining*,
I will venture to say, that could have been
displayed before her—“ No, Sir (pursued
“ his Grace) it was what I would *much*
“ rather have *avoided*, but you have
“ *already* so completely exposed yourself,
“ that

“ that it is *too* late to correct *our* mutual
“ fault; how *you* have acted wrong, I
“ need *not* explain, but *I* should have had
“ more command of my temper; I should
“ have governed it with more address,
“ and requested the honour of your at-
“ tendance in my closet; *where*, if *you*
“ recollect, we have *lately* spent some very
“ agreeable hours together, in arranging
“ *certain* settlements, which *you then* made
“ me believe was necessary to your hap-
“ piness.”

Henry bowed profoundly, but answered not a syllable.

“ And why is it that they are no longer
“ necessary to *your* felicity, *young* man;
“ *has* Miss Montague given you any cause
“ for *offence*? Your *impertinence* conveys
“ an accusation against her, that *shall* be
“ removed—I *command* you to tell me.”

“ With sorrow I repeat to your Grace,
“ that it is not in my power—*time* only
“ can justify me to *you*, and to Miss Mon-
“ tague.”

“ There

“ There is *no* time but the *present* (said
“ the Duchefs, rifing with great warmth,
“ and turning herself to the parties who
“ were both standing), there is *not* an-
“ other *moment* to which the clearing up
“ *this* vile affair *can* be delayed—hear me,
“ Lexington, for I *will* be heard—the
“ infidelity of which you shew yourself
“ capable, is big with mischief; it strikes
“ at the fame of an amiable, lovely girl,
“ who has done you *too* much honour in
“ accepting *your* propofals. The public
“ manner in which you have chose to
“ withdraw them, demands *instant* and
“ *proper* reasons, *publicly* affigned for your
“ *infidelity*; or the inuendo you *obliquely*
“ cast on *her*, will, every moment they are
“ permitted to remain, *stamp* you—Coward
“ —Incendiary—Savage—and I tell you,
“ *Lexington*, there is not a cause in *heaven*
“ or on *earth*, in *reason* or in *folly*, that
“ ought to prevent *you* from doing jus-
“ tice to the Grand-daughter of Lady
“ Auberry.”

And

And now, my friend, is not your whole soul in a state of alarm for your incomparable Mary; and does not your fond heart yearn to know how she supported *this* part of her *trying* situation?—Have I not hitherto given you more cause for *exultation* than for *mortification*? And what remains untold, you must find better food to gratify your vanity, than matter to excite your vexation—Suppose you had been present when that part of the conversation took place, which wounded her in every possible direction: would you have done as I did, and risen from your chair to leave the room? Would you have said as I did, “Come, my dear child, let us retire?”—No, no; I have not half *your* fortitude; there is nobody in the world that possesses it in the *same* degree with yourself, *except* Miss Montague—guess if I say more of her than she deserves, when I tell you what was her reply, on my making the foolish proposal to withdraw.

“ Not for the world (said she), shall I
“ run away from *any* imputation which is
“ *falsely* laid to *my* charge—I am not an
“ object of pity—but I *pity* Mr. Lexington;
“ had I given him occasion to complain, I should certainly *fear* him; I am
“ sensible of your kind intentions in drawing me hence; but, conscious that I do
“ not deserve his reproaches, to see his
“ *face*, or to hear his *voice*, can convey
“ no terrors to *my* mind, that should make
“ me wish to avoid him.”

I make no animadversions, for I am impatient to bring the argument, and its conclusion, before your Ladyship.

Lexington continued immoveable, and only repeated to the Duchess what he had before said to the Duke; her Grace left the *stubborn* culprit in a great rage, saying, as she turned from him, “ I *have* loved
“ you, *Sir*, till now, with the fondness of
“ a mother—but now I have done with
“ you *for ever*.”

Lord

Lord Francis, though he stood close to his nephew, had not all this time opened his lips; the Duchess retiring with so much displeasure, made him observe, "that he was sorry to see *family* breaches widened, which, with some little *skill* and tenderness, it was *still* possible to heal—" for his part, he must, though unasked, give it as his opinion, that if a man *did* change his mind, and not choose to declare for what cause he changed it, the wrestling it from him by violence was a freedom he should never think of supporting, either by example or suffering age."

"*This* is fine talking (muttered the Duchess)."

He could not comprehend *why* it was necessary such a man, merely because he would not give up his secret, should be hated like a wild beast, or hunted from society as a monster of mischief—It was *impossible* a fame so well *established* as Miss Montague's, could in the *smallest* degree

suffer from a little *natural* infidelity, to which he *believed* all mankind were *more* or *less* addicted—shew *him* the villain *hereafter*, who would dare to throw but the *shadow* of censure on the conduct of *Miss Montague*, and he would have the honour to vindicate her, *not* with words *merely*, but by those means which he should think it lawful to vindicate a daughter—daughter he had none—the greater his misfortune—but his judgment and his heart had united, to adopt as *such* the young Lady, whose merits and situation gave her the *most* undoubted claim to the affections of his *whole* family.

I did not like the first part of this long harrangue; his words were uttered with an air of pique, and when he began to talk of crimes, for which there is no excuse, calling them *little, natural infidelities*, I expected he meant to compliment, *rather* than blame, his nephew; however, it ended so much better than it began, that, on the whole, I was not very much displeased—
the

the Duchefs treated him with contemptuous inattention, and I believe, from what immediately followed the clofe of his fpeech, the Duke was not much penetrated by any of his Lordship's arguments.

"*Brother* (faid his Grace), I know your "*good* intentions, and acknowledge the "*philanthropy* by which *you* are governed; but my *present* bufinefs is with "*Mr. Lexington*—I demand of *him*, whether he *will*, or will *not*, put off his "*intended* excurfion to the Continent."

"I go certainly, my Lord—I have "*already* ftaid *too* long."—(He darted a look at your Grand-daughter, and I faw a large tear roll down his cheek.) "I "*will* convince your Grace *hereafter*, "*that* I am no *Scoundrel*, *Incendiary*, or "*Savage*."

"Will you put off your intentions for "*one* week?"

"It is utterly impoffible."

“ Go, then, ungrateful, unfeeling boy;
“ my *little* you must inherit, but my *friend-*
“ *ship* is forfeited for ever.”

Lexington eagerly caught hold of his Uncle's hand, who angrily struggled to release it from his grasp; he carried it with fervour to his lips, but his agitation was too great for utterance, and the Duke hurried out of the room—he then addressed something in a low voice to Lord Francis; I could not hear what were his words, but the reply was—“ You may depend on “ *me*, Henry.”

I was all observation to his movements, anxious for what was to come next.—He walked to the window, threw up the sash, pulled it down again; observed it was a fine morning, though it was pouring with rain, as if the heavens had melted into tears at the pathetic scene I have been trying to represent.

I do not greatly *admire* his sisters, so have said nothing about them—they had sometimes given their *advice*, and added
intreaties

intreaties to it; but, both united, failed of gaining any attention from the person to whom they were *directed*.—Mrs. Oxburn was silent, but not idle, I dare say; she seemed to be putting down on her memory all that was said, and *not in short-hand*.

The Duchefs having taken herself off, after renouncing Lexington for ever, had sat down at her embroidering frame with that assumed coldness, which was equal to her saying, “I am, from this moment, entirely independent of any farther debates;” she drew out her needle in sullen majesty, and only answered when spoken to in monosyllables.

As Henry made his last remark, he approached towards her, and requested that he might have the honour of presenting her his last adieu.

She replied, without lifting up her face, “You may excuse yourself from *that* trouble, Sir, for I am not at *leisure* to receive them.”—“Though you will not permit me, Madam (he retorted

“ with more pathos than anger) to pay any
“ part of my debt; yet I have a heart that
“ acknowledges the whole of your goodness;
“ which heart, till I see you again,
“ shall be crowded with prayers for your
“ health, and my own restoration to your
“ favour.”

“ I *wish* you would listen to *reason*,”
(said she, in a softened tone).

“ Thank you a thousand times, my dear
“ Aunt, for *that wish*—think me *unreasonable*
“ still, but do not think me a *villain*.”

“ You will go, *then*?—Good God! how
“ can you be so ridiculous!”

“ It is not *choice* that leads, but *necessity*
“ that forces me to go.”

“ *Necessity* (repeated her Grace); why
“ don’t you speak to your Uncle, if *that*
“ is all—the derangement of a young
“ man’s affairs is no reproach—I am sure
“ the Duke will make you easy.”

“ Not his Grace’s whole fortune would
“ make me easy, Madam.”

“ Then

"Then you must be dreadfully involved."

"Dreadfully involved indeed."

"O Lexington! Lexington! I too well understand you! *repent*, and be forgiven—I will answer for Miss Montague's forgiveness."

"Have you any commands, *Madam*, for France or Italy?"

"None ~~that~~ I think *you* worthy to execute."

He bowed, and returned to his post by the fire; talked a moment to Lord Francis; went from him to his sisters, who were perfect *Niobes*; saluted them; came back again; drew nearer to my side, and said, "God bless you! Lady Jane." Had he said more, I should not have understood him, his voice was so suffocated with emotion—Lord Francis took him by the arm, and dragged him several times up and down the room, with no other intention, I believe, than to prevent him from speaking to Miss Montague; for I saw he

had it in contemplation to advance, and that he was collecting himself for the trial. No doubt his Lordship thought a particular address from him would affect her too much; but his precaution, whether right or wrong, did not succeed; for, stopping short at the third turn, he disengaged the arm on which his Uncle had been resting, and was in a moment at the feet of your Grand-daughter.

Every soul that witnessed this unexpected manœuvre, stared with astonishment: Mary, who till now had preserved her composure, sprung from her seat, and would have fled, but she was surrounded in a moment, and nobody was inclined to favour her escape. “ If I *must* stay (said she, with renovated courage), Mr. Lexington must not add to my mortification, by *insulting* me with *feigned humiliation*; if you choose to rise, Sir, and will permit *me* to sit down, I can have no possible objection to hear what the Duke of Cleveland’s *nephew* wishes to say to
“ the

“ the Duke of Cleveland’s *ward*; no other
“ connection can *now* ever exist between
“ us.”

“ I *know* it! I *know* it! I *know* it!—(ex-
“ claimed Henry), and it is for *your* dear
“ sake *only* that I repeat these *baneful*
“ words—*No other connection can now ever*
“ *exist between us.*—Are you satisfied,
“ Madam?”

“ Perfectly, Sir.”

“ And if you was not *satisfied*, Miss
“ Montague, you would be the most un-
“ grateful of human beings. O Mary!
“ till you can fathom the delicacy, the
“ extent of that deep-rooted passion I
“ have sacrificed to *your future* happiness,
“ you can make *no* calculation of the gra-
“ titude you owe me.”

“ Whatever the debt may be, Sir, I am
“ content to take your estimate of it,
“ rather than give myself the trouble of
“ contesting the substance of your unex-
“ pected demand—I am a proud and par-
“ tial arithmetician; perhaps if I was to

“ make my *own* calculation, my figures
 “ might not tally so exactly with your own;
 “ but that there might be errors on one
 “ side or the other—you *say* you are en-
 “ titled to my thanks—receive them, Sir,
 “ on the score of gratitude; I shall be
 “ better pleased to pay too much than too
 “ little.”—And she curtsied to him with
 a grace and dignity, that I never saw
 equalled, though her beautiful face, co-
 vered with blushes, was modestly averted
 from the traitor.

He was agitated beyond all description,
 and asked, in a tremulous voice, “ Are we
 “ friends, Miss Montague?”

She was silent, not from anger, but
 inability to say more, and he cried out—
 “ No, no, no! you are not my *friend*!
 “ you shall not be my friend.—How *poor*,
 “ how *abject* a boon is *friendship*, for him to
 “ solicit, who has aspired to the exquisite
 “ bliss of loving, of being beloved, of calling
 “ you his own forever—Keep your *friend-*
 “ *ship*, bestow it with your hand and your
 “ heart;

“ heart; the gift will be incomplete with-
“ out it—cherish my memory with grati-
“ tude, but I charge you do not cherish
“ it with *friendship*—*Adieu!* the pang of
“ separation is passed: *farewell, Mary*—
“ farewell Sisters! Friends, happiness, all
“ *farewell!*” He was gone—the flash of
his exit was like lightning, so rapid, that
it could not be marked.

Nothing now remains for me to commu-
nicate of this strange business—strange and
complicated as it is, one day or other it
will clear up itself, by some of those *many*
causes, that must naturally combine to
form a mystery so astonishing—The wheels
and springs cannot *all* be good, and when
one of them happens to fail, the whole
complicated fabric must be exposed, which
at present is wrapped up in error and
darkness.

Surely I should disgrace the heart of
your Mary, by concealing from you the
many tears of sensibility she has let fall to
the memory of Lexington’s defection from
her,

her, and from his *country*; but they are not like those of a selfish mourner's, who can feel only for themselves—they are given in much greater profusion to the woes of *others*, than to her *own* distresses.

This dear victim to the caprice of man's unsteady affection, now devotes her whole attention to the good Duke, who, after a very restless, agitated night, was this morning, or rather yesterday, for it is now three o'clock, and Saturday is already three hours in advance—Well then, yesterday it was, that this second stroke, more alarming than the former, took place. I will not flatter your Ladyship, by saying much hope is entertained of his recovery; but the Faculty do not scruple to pronounce that *possibility* remains, though *probability* is excluded.

I am still in Grosvenor Square—if I am not a useful member of the family, I am certainly gratified by seeing that it is in my power to give some small degree of comfort to the Duchess, whose affection for her

her husband is not the least amiable feature of her mind. She knows he has had a stroke, but thinks it the first; so that though her terrors are stronger than my own, her hopes of his doing well are also much more sanguine.

A messenger was dispatched to Dover, but Lexington was failed. The express, who received his direction from Lord Francis, was ordered to proceed no further if he did not come up with him there; and I have only just now heard of his return to town, and the ill-success of his journey.

I embraced your beloved two hours ago, for not till one o'clock did she leave the Duke's room. I have caused a bed to be put up in her apartment for myself, and am at this present moment not three yards from where she is sleeping sweetly and soundly. I have looked in upon her with admiration and affection, such only as you can feel, ten times since I kissed her and wished her a good night.

Your

Your Grand-daughter's messages of duty, love, and I know not what, are so many, that I must postpone them, if I would get any refreshment from sleep before I am called down to breakfast; but this will be no loss to you, for to-morrow Mary will make your Ladyship ample amends, by the exertions of her own for the omissions of my pen.

I am, dearest Lady Auberry, with much more than modern sincerity, the warmest admirer of your virtues, and the truest of your friends.

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XL.

Mrs. Oxburn to Sir Ashton Montague.

April 13, 17—

O yes, to be sure, you are a notable caterer for your *own necessities*—and the *pleasures* creep, creep, creep—do you think ever to get on, thou *man-slug*, at *this* pace? Dame Fortune serves the cause of Auberry a thousand times better than you do—I shall stick to *her*, and leave you as far behind me in *execution*, as you must allow yourself to be already in *talents*.

I have no *particular* wish to please *that* half-mad, half-fool sprig of nobility after all, if it pleases *him* to be wholly *mad*, wholly *fool*. If he intends to marry, when
he

he can, *that* odious, censorious prude, Mary Montague, who I hate with all my *heart*, all my *soul*, and all my *strength*, I will put *such* a spoke in his *wheel*, that it shall not whirl him to his destruction so swiftly as he imagines——But more of this when we meet.

I want you to tell me what you are about—I have not had a line from you since your last conference with my dear little Andrew Solemn.—How well do the name and the face of that excellent actor agree together? I really envy him the mask of wisdom, under which he does so much more business, in the way of mischief, than can be done where one has the misfortune to carry about a gossiping countenance, which blabs all the tittle-tattle that passes in the mind:—Perhaps a medium is better than either—such a one, for instance, as my own, open but not silly, playful but not wicked; it is a charming letter of recommendation, a wonderful good decoy—many a romantic Miss does it draw in to
tell

tell me all her secrets, which I never meddle with afterwards, unless I can turn them to my *own* advantage; and *that* is a pretty universal privilege amongst females.

Somebody says,

To give a young gentleman right education,
The army's the only good school in the nation.

Now I say,

To give a young damsel a right education,
This town is the only good school in the nation.

Oh, what a difference is there between your *puritan* cousin and your *lively* friend! *She* has been nursed up in the lap of her old dandling Grandmother—I rocked in the delicious cradle of pleasure;—*she* crammed, like a Dorking fowl, with the force-meat of prudence—I gently fed with honey from the soft hands of luxury;—*her* lullabys were all sung to Grandmamma's old tune of discretion—*mine*, airs of conquest, set to the music of triumph;—*she* has been foused over head and ears in
rivers

rivers of wisdom, to fish for obsolete duties—I paddling down the stream of dissipation, to make me forget *them*—now, which do you think has the best of it? *She* who is afraid of *everything*—or *I* who am afraid of *nothing*: but I have a fine story to tell you, when I come to it; I mean the heads only, as the rest I suppose you will see in the *World*, the *Herald*, and all the other papers; for *there* I am certain the whole, and perhaps more than the whole, will appear oftener than once at full length.

These *newspapers*, Montague, after all, are the *most* delightful *things* in the world—without them, so charmingly wicked and witty, upon certain occasions, where one does not choose to appear as an *ostensible* party—for *instance*, suppose an insignificant *anybody* was to take it into her head, that *you* or *I*, or Master Solemn, or half a score more of us, had been plotting mischief against *her*, and should be *impertinent* enough to *tell us so*—to call upon
us

us *openly* to defend *ourselves*, actually put the libel into *print*, and sign it with her *own name*—such a daring summons, you know, might in *some* cases puzzle the very *wisest* men and women, if they have not something ready to say for themselves pretty much to the *purpose*; but as long as these *divine* creatures, the *editors* of newspapers, are so good to flip us into a corner, and circulate *our* squibs through ten thousand hands of a morning, we must be *dunces* indeed, if, fighting behind a *bush*, we do not come off with *victory*: the worst of it is, these gentlemen editors are sometimes a little *too* conscientious, and if the paragraph is *strongly* worded, they will refuse to take it without a *name*; that is rather inconvenient; for *satire*, wanting strength, is as dull as *epigram* without point.

I told you of our *love feast* in Grosvenor Square; it was the *seasoning* of my last letter—the *salt* of this must be to tell you, that it ended last Friday, as all *love feasts* must end *sooner* or *later*—it is true, *Montague*;

tague; will you dare to deny the fact?—
O Lord! there is not even a crumb of comfort remaining to me, of any love feast I have had the felicity to be engaged in—I suppose Lexington, and his *prude*, grew tired of looking at each other, like the two figures over St. Dunstan's clock, or the giants at Guildhall—now I am not at all certain that the eyes of these good people do any of them turn towards each other—however, *you* must suppose what *I* suppose, and the simile will do very well.

Expound me this riddle—What is it that kindles the quickest, burns the fiercest, and goes out the soonest?—for fear your *inexperience*, as to the nature of *this immaterial something* should set you puzzling to find it out, I will tell you, it is the *ardour* of a lover; I never saw any thing *burn* as they did in the eyes of Lexington at the *love feast*, or go out so *rapidly* as on the day he set off for the Continent.

I hap-

I happened to pop in upon them when they were all together by the ears—Lexington's situation put me in mind of a poor rat in an assembly of cats, all scratching and clawing the distressed animal without mercy—I was infinitely delighted with the drollery of the scene—it came, as all joys must come, to make us relish them in perfection; that is to say, by *surprise*: yet I believe the pleasure I felt to witness the humiliation of that *saint* in *buckram*, your *pious* cousin, Mary, was very little inferior to those transports with which I saw Lexington make his escape, with the velocity of a rocket from the *fangs* and *claws* of his pursuing *pussy-cat* family—I like his sisters; they are like myself, a good sort of people, and not at all infatuated by Miss Montague's *universal* powers of fascination.

I suppose you know that the dandling Duke has had a *stroke* of something—I don't know what—but they say it will be the death of him; and no great matter, a

better

better must reign in his *stead*; at least, rather better than poor old *yea* and *nay*.

Montague, I will never forgive you, if I have not a letter soon, and all *about it*; you understand me—your silence has seriously given me offence; and, like heaven, I pardon none but *penitent* finners—I wonder if I shall ever *repent*—I fear the *thing* is impossible. Adieu!

CAR. OXBURN.

LETTER

LETTER XLI.

Miss Montague to Lady Auberry.

April 13, 17—

WHAT shall I say to my dearest Grand-mamma of Lady Jane Petworth's goodness to your grateful Mary; if I had twenty lives, and if I was to lay them all down for this angel woman, still I should be her debtor.

It is impossible for language to express the millionth part of her kindness to me—how should I have held up my head, on a *late* occasion, but for her encouraging presence—or how should I have been capable of telling you what passed on *that* occasion?—Lady Jane has laid all the par-

ticulars before you—thank God! you know them *all!* and my mind is relieved from a burthen that pressed it with sadness.

What are disappointments? What are mortifications? they could visit me in no very frightful shape, if I might be allowed to bear them singly—but when I consider, that the lightning which scorches the *branch*, does not spare the *root*, then it is that the arrows of grief are fresh pointed, and my heart is pierced with the apprehension of *your* feeling more *for* me than I really feel *for* myself—the moment I see under your dear hands these words—“*Mary, I am satisfied with your conduct, and not grieved at your disappointment,*” that moment I shall find my serenity restored, and no cloud of *dejection* shall afterwards be conjured up to *obscure* my joys, or *disturb* my tranquillity.

Lady Jane, who never opens her lips but to dispense comfort, has just called in upon me; and looking over what I have

have written, gives me so much encouragement to *hope* that you will think little or nothing of the *strange* affair, that I am really convinced she is in the right; I shall therefore set about my own *reformation*, on the mere authority of her Ladyship's assertions, without waiting to have them confirmed by yourself.

I will confess, that yesterday, and the day before I was *very* silly; I did not exert my spirits as I should have done, to combat the vexations that weighed them down; but I have this excuse for my weakness, that when I suffered my mind to become the prey of melancholy, Mr. Lexington had not *all* the merit of making me unhappy; upon my word, I experienced a great deal more for the Duke's state of extreme danger: to day his symptoms, thank God, are mended; the physicians say there is much probability he will be restored to us.

Lady Jane has told you the warm and generous support I have met with, both

from his Grace and the *Duchefs*: judge then what were my feelings of distress, when *one* of these dear protectors was so near being taken from me, and the other of being reduced to sorrowful solitary widowhood, by an accident, which, though I could not prevent, originated from *my* unfortunate situation in *their* family. Well! that is *now* over: the *Duke* will recover; the *Duchefs* will not be a widow—these were ugly spectres of horror, but they disappear; my spirits mount, and my terrors are vanished with them.

Have I ever been a dissembler, my indulgent parent? No, that thought should be driven from my heart; that could not stand the test of your partial examination—I think more of Mr. Lexington, than perhaps I ought to do: yet I blush not to tell you so—you will find no faulty weakness lurking at the bottom of this confession—I have sifted it thoroughly; it is a sentiment of compassion, unmixed with any other wish or desire, than for his restoration

tion to peace. I should certainly never have accepted the proposals, with that very small portion of preference, which could allow me to relinquish my views of happiness in the attachment he professed for me with *mere* regret, *cold* phlegmatic *regret*. The tears I have shed witness for me that I have felt much *more* than regret in parting for ever with Mr. Lexington—the treachery of Lord Auberry did not cost me half the sorrow that I have known within the three last days. I was a mere child when I persuaded myself to believe his insidious protestations; the insults with which he treated me did not enter into my mind with the same pungent sharpness that those do to which I have lately been subjected. I can forgive Lord Auberry; I can receive him as a relation; would he but own his marriage—I can *pity*, yet I cannot *forgive* Mr. Lexington: how comes it that I am not able to understand or translate this extraordinary language of the heart—ah! dear Grandmamma, I

will think of him no more, if I can help it—but I must speak of him a little longer.

When I went in to the Duchefs, before Lady Jane and I fat down to breakfast, I found, on enquiring, how her Grace had rested; that she complained of having passed a sleepless night, which she attributed to her woman having told her, just as she was going to bed, that the Duke had sent orders for his lawyers to attend him this day at one o'clock. "I fear (said she), the Duke means to disinherit his nephew; and though nobody in the world can be more *angry* with him than *I am*, yet my dear Miss Montague, you will not, I am sure, accuse me of any disrespect to *you*, by saying, I do not wish him to be *quite* so much punished, as to lose the largest part of his Uncle's property, which it is in his power to sever from the dukedom."

Can you not guess what was the answer of your Mary—do you not see me in the
act

act of kissing her Grace's hand, thanking—praising—loving her better than I ever loved her before—did she not deserve it?—indeed I could have fallen at her feet, to announce my gratitude for her kind consideration, in what so eventually concerns the interest of the Duke's nephew: had he even been her own son, and under the displeasure of his father, this anxiety to reinstate him, would, in my opinion, have lost more than half its merit: she was pleased with the ardency of my approbation, and bid me, when I went to the Duke's apartment, find out, if I could, what were his real intentions; as she had yet no other grounds for her apprehensions, but his sending for the lawyer, who it was possible might be wanted on business which had no reference to poor Lexington. “Indeed, my dear (added “her Grace), though I condemn, I am “*sorry* for him; the foolish boy must have “got himself into some scrape or other,

“ that will not at present allow him to fulfill his engagements to *you* ; nevertheless, I plainly see he *still* loves you to dis- traction.”

“ I should be extremely sorry for *that* (said I), because it would only create to himself an *additional* cause for uneasiness.”

“ Why *surely* Miss Montague, *if* he was at liberty to *renew* his proposals, which I have no doubt he one day or other *will* do, *you* would not be so cruel to *reject* them.”

“ I could not be so cruel to myself, as to accept them.”

“ Pish, child, you are talking absolute *nonsense* ; I permit you to feel as much resentment for him at *present* as you please ; but I should think you a little idiot, if you could not forgive *one* fault, where there are so many advantages to counterbalance it. *Ducal* coronets do not grow on the tree of peerage, like
“ pippins

“ pippins in the garden of a peasant; every
“ title is not a Duke—nor every man who
“ wears it a Lexington.”

“ Then, dear Duchefs, less *honors*, and
“ less *merit*, must content *me*; for never,
“ never will I be the wife of Mr. Lex-
“ ington.”

“ How like a pretty Miss you are talk-
“ ing; but get you gone, and when you
“ have been to breakfast, go to the Duke,
“ and find out what he wants with the
“ lawyer.”

I told Lady Jane all that had passed, and she was highly diverted with our amicable contest: she too had her *doubts* as well as the Duchefs, that if I *could* I *would*; but I took *more* pains to convince her Ladyship than her Grace, and she is *now* satisfied, not only that I would be *firm* in the midst of temptation, but that my firmness is built on a rational foundation.

I had risen rather late; my conversation with her Grace, and the time taken up

over the tea-table, brought it to something more than half after twelve, before I got to the Duke's chamber.

The curtains of his bed were closed on that side next the door, and I walked softly for fear of disturbing him; his valet, who was waiting in the room, saw me enter, and the next moment went out, saying, "His Grace is not asleep, Madam." I then left off my creeping pace, and drew near the side of his bed.

He was sitting up supported by pillows, a dressing gown thrown over his shoulders, his night-cap laying on the quilt, and the old brown scratch wig, that he always wears, except on levee or drawing-room occasions, was replaced on his head; the curtains were thrown open opposite the windows, as was one of the sashes—the whole appearance of himself, and the apartment, was so very different from what I had seen them a few hours before, when *one* seemed to be verging on eternity, and the *other* to represent the chamber

ber of death, that I was struck almost with as much surprise, as if I had been the witness of a resurrection.

A small writing table, on which was pens, ink, and some parcels of paper tied round with red tape, was placed close by his side; a large book rested on his knees; a folded paper lay upon it. He was going to write; he held the pen in his hand, and was ruminating on his subject with so much attention, that, till I spoke, he had no idea that I was so near him.

In reply to my warm expressions of joy at finding him recovered so much beyond the most sanguine of my hopes, he said, "Yes, my dear child, it has pleased God
"to lengthen my date of life a little
"longer; long enough, *I* hope, to perform an act of justice, and then I shall
"be satisfied: sit down, that I may have
"the pleasure of looking at you, and
"hearing you speak; for by and by I
"shall be forced to send you away."

“ And why am I to be sent away, dear Duke? Is my dutiful attendance grown a burthen to you?”

“ No; my good girl, no: but I must be in private for a time, with a person who comes to me on *material* business; I do not expect him this half hour, and till *then* I will indulge myself with your company.”

“ But your Grace was going to write; shall I guess on what subject; and, if I am not wrong in my conjectures, let me go now, and return again when you are more at leisure; so charming a proof of your goodness, of which all the benefit will result on myself, should not be delayed a moment.”

“ I meant to have written, it is true, but my hand I find is not yet sufficiently steady for the purpose; I can as well *give* my directions verbally, as *write* them; but how comes it that you are able to guess at my intentions?”

“ Because,

“ Because, my Lord, there is nothing
“ in the world that makes people so keen
“ sighted, as the selfish wish of promoting
“ their own interest: Will you try me?
“ will you just let me draw out a rough
“ sketch of your kind meaning, and if I
“ do not give the exact transcript of your
“ Grace’s heart, without asking one lead-
“ ing question, the mortification my error
“ must bring with it, will be abundant
“ punishment for my presumption.”

He looked surprised—“ Remember,
“ Miss Montague, you are to put yourself
“ in *my* situation, and to *give* exactly the
“ *same* instruction as I should have *given*;
“ I admire your numberless talents, but
“ this of divination being a new one, it
“ raises my curiosity to discover whether
“ it be as worthy of admiration as the
“ rest.”

“ Yes (said I), you shall find me a true
“ prophetess; I will translate your most
“ hidden thoughts, and give the very in-
“ structions

“ instructions you yourself, or the *most* maturest consideration, would have given.”

I sat down, took up a pen, and in two seconds wrote as follows :

It is the Duke of Cleveland's instructions to the best of human hearts, that all passions destructive to its internal peace shall be forthwith banished the citadel; and that the gates of reconciliation be thrown open for the triumphal entry of mercy, forgiveness, affection, *and* the orphan son of his brother.

The Duke was impatient to see what I had written; I put the paper into his hands; I cannot tell you what followed; I can only say, I gained a complete victory, but I must be silent as to the flattering honours by which it was attended; my vanity is not equal to a repetition of them.

The Dukes and Lady Jane were no sooner informed of my success, than they also conferred on me a thousand, a thousand
sand

land praises—and for what? Why, for having made Mr. Lexington's peace with his Uncle—was it not the very best possible means by which I could obtain my own approbation, and of course secure my own felicity.

How I long for your next letter—but, oh, how much more ardently do I long to be pressed in your sheltering arms, and to receive the sisterly embraces of that amiable friend, who, in all tender attentions to my beloved parent, is the substitute of your dutiful, grateful, and affectionate

MARY MONTAGUE.

INCLINATION

INCLINATION again assails me to step once more into the road of narrative—the substance of the next three or four letters will answer my purpose better than the letters themselves. With my readers interest therefore in view, I shall perform the office of a pioneer, to go before them, and take away all the impediments that would otherwise obstruct their passage to the end of ambiguity on the memoirs of Mary.

I now bend my steps towards the pleasant retirement of Lady Auberry, and throw open the gates of Riversdale for the reception of all such travellers as are willing to turn out of the path of fashion, and rest awhile under the shade of domestic occurrences.

On the day when Lady Jane Petworth's long letter, which conveyed the surprising intelligence of Mr. Lexington's desertion,
came

came to the hands of Lady Auberry, Miss Beaully and the Chaplain were gone on a charitable visit to Dame Estrage, who had sent at the dawn of day to desire she might speak to them before she died; feeling, as she declared, that her end was approaching, they hastened to obey the summons, but came *too* late; it was all over with the poor woman five minutes before their carriage drove up to the door of her cottage.

A girl, who had been long hired, and was paid by Miss Montague for attending her old nurse, came out, weeping bitterly, and invited them in very kindly to look at the corpse, but they civilly refused her courtesy, and enquired, amongst many other things respecting her late mistress, if any of her sons were with her at the time of her decease;—Samuel (which was the eldest) had been with his mother about two hours before she departed, and then added, mistress talked desperate long to him; and I heard her say, if his Reverence

rence, and your Ladyship, did not come till she was dead, he must go and tell you something—I don't know what—or she should never die in no peace at all.

Greatly shocked at the circumstance of her sudden death, they returned to Riverdale, expecting to have found Lady Auberry in the breakfast room—she was not there—they thought she might be retired to her closet, and sat down to wait for her return.—“ This event (said Miss Beaully), so unexpected, will give her Ladyship, as well as Miss Montague, a great deal of concern; we must break it to them as gently as we can.”—A letter that lay on the table, attracted her notice; she immediately took it up; it was from her aunt, and the same that has already made its appearance in this history—Mr. Sanford would have retired as she broke the seal; but having cast her eyes over the two first lines, she called after him, “ For God sake, Sir, come back.”—He did as she desired him, and asked
hastily,

hastily, "What was the matter?" Seeing her tremble, and looking as pale as ashes—
"that I cannot tell you (she replied), but
"something *very* frightful has happened;
"read this," and she put the letter into
his hand.

Besides being the domestic chaplain of Lady Auberry, Mr. Sanford was likewise the parish priest of her village; all the early and middle part of his life he had been buffeted by afflictions of every description, all of which he supported with such perfect and chearful resignation to the will of Divine Providence, as might have been called unprecedented, had not the same submissive virtues equally predominated in the bright example of his noble patroness.

"Oh! (exclaimed Miss Beauly), what
"is this blow that threatens to destroy the
"prospects, the hopes of Lady Auberry,
"dear estimable Lady Auberry! whatever
"it is, you are already informed of it;
"but

“but was you prepared for its reception?”

“Fear not, my good Miss Beauly (said Sanford), she who is more than a nominal Christian, can never be unprepared to take up the cross:” as he said this, the door opened, and Lady Auberry, with a smiling countenance, came out of her closet, leaning on her ebony headed cane—she asked them after the health of her *protegee*; and was informed by Sanford, that she was taken from this life to a better.

She was silent for a moment—then said, “God’s will be done, *now* and *always*—do you know (continued she), that I have had a letter from your dear Aunt this morning.”

“Oh! Lady Auberry; how calm, how composed you are; is it possible my Aunt’s letter has not afflicted you?”

“Lady Jane has told you, I perceive, what has happened in Grosvenor-square.”

“Indeed

“ Indeed I am ignorant of every thing,
“ except her fears that the intelligence she
“ has now sent your Ladyship will not
“ bring with it that increase of satisfaction
“ she always wishes to communicate.”

“ Then she is mistaken, my dear—here
“ is the pretty history she has sent me; go
“ into the next room, take Mr. Sandford
“ with you, and when you have read it
“ together, return, and tell me if I am not
“ more entitled to your congratulations
“ than to your condolence.” She held
out Lady Jane’s packet to Miss Beaully,
who kissed the hand that presented it—she
cast a look at the Chaplain in silent wonder—he met it with another, more expressive of veneration than surprise; and having withdrawn long enough to go through the whole distressing recital, when they came back, no two faces ever spoke in stronger language the sentiments each had imbibed in the perusal—many a straggling tear had escaped from the full eyes of Miss Beaully, in contemplating the for-
rows

rows and the disappointments of Mary; whilst the reflection, how gloriously the *same* Mary had sustained those *severe* trials, gave an air of exultation to the *sombre* features of the worthy divine, which made him look ten years younger than when he left the apartment.

“ My dear (said Lady Auberry), I see
“ you are a very foolish girl, and that you
“ have been weeping over the transitory
“ mortification of your forsaken friend—
“ but what says Mr. Sandford—has not
“ my darling child nobly acquitted her-
“ self?”

As she said this, a hand was graciously extended towards each; but before it was in the power of either to reply, a servant entered, and informed his lady, that a gentleman in a chaise and four had driven into the back yard, and sent to request the honour of half an hour's conference with her Ladyship on business of great importance.

She

She gave orders for his admittance, and made no objection to Mr. Sandford's hint, that he would take himself off; or to Miss Beauly's walking a few turns in the garden, whilst the stranger was to receive his audience—the name of this stranger had been demanded by the servant, who brought up the message, but he said it was of no consequence to send in his name, as he had not the honour of being known to Lady Auberry,

There was in the figure, countenance, air, and address of the *gentleman* without a name, who now made his appearance, a something that gave her Ladyship very favourable prepossessions of his rank and education; but before *she* is re-seated, or *he* has taken the place she offers him next to her own, I shall present him at full length to the notice of my readers.

His height was of the tallest middle size—his person thin—his complexion fallow—his eyes dark and penetrating—his countenance sedate, with certain impressions
of

of melancholy, best described in the portraits of the unfortunate royal race of *Stuarts*; indeed the whole *contour* of his face very much resembles all the original pictures I have ever seen of *that* family.

Lady Auberry marked the reception she gave him, with the state of ancient and the ease of modern good breeding, which he returned by the most masterly strokes of politeness; said so many civil things of Riversdale, its plantations, its situation, and the beauty of the country through which he had travelled for the last thirty miles, that the good old lady, who was prouder of her castle than of any other object in the world, except her Granddaughter, seemed, in the gratification he afforded her, to have forgot she had never seen him before, and that he came to her, as was signified by his own message, upon business of *importance*—but the gentleman was truly a gentleman *of* business; it was therefore his affair to remember what he came about.

“ I am

“ I am always sorry, Madam, said Mr. Solemn,” (for it was no other than the learned Mr. *Andrew Solemn*, the friend and factotum both of Lord Francis, Lexington, and Sir Ashton Montague, who was now addressing himself to Lady Auberry, having announced his name to her before I announced it to my readers.) “ I am always infinitely concerned (said Master Solemn), when so ancient a house as this has no *lineal* descendant to support its dignities; and since I have had the honour of conversing with your Ladyship, I particularly regret it in *this* instance—I am informed your Ladyship never had a son, and that a branch of the Pledells has succeeded to the late Earl’s titles and estates.”

“ You are well informed, Sir; one daughter was the only fruit of my marriage; and that one—” Lady Auberry paused—it was the pause of tender recollection, and perfectly convenient to the man of business; who took the opportunity

of her silence, to observe, in a voice of sympathy, that the death of Lady Mary Pledell was, on *many* accounts, independent of her Ladyship's *maternal* feelings, one of the *most* unfortunate events that could have happened.

“ O, Sir! (she replied) I have been
“ long a pupil in the school of misfortune,
“ and must have been a profound dunce,
“ if by this time I had not learnt the
“ lesson of submission—I have ceased to
“ repine at the early fate of my fainted
“ daughter; *she* is blessed, and through
“ the lovely child of her marriage with
“ Colonel Montague, I am blessed also.”

Master Solemn drew out his handkerchief, turned aside his head, and wiped his dry eyes.

“ You are very humane, Sir, and I am
“ a fool to trouble you with my domestic
“ concerns; your kindness led me into an
“ error; I can hardly persuade myself that
“ *this* is the first time I have had the plea-
“ sure of seeing you.”

She

She offered him refreshments, but he declined them, having breakfasted at the last stage.

Another moment of silence ensued; it was broken by the lawyer, who, with *much* ceremony, *more* compliments, and *greater* cunning, "hoped her Ladyship, who he "was happy to find possessed the most "liberal mind in the world, would pardon "him, if, as a *professional* man, he was "under the painful necessity of offending "her delicacy, by proposing a *few* questions, which the duty he owed his client "forced him to ask: though (added he) the "*respect*, the *reverence* in which I *now* hold "the character of Lady Auberry, will "make it the *most* disgusting affair I have "ever yet undertaken in the whole course "of my practice."

"And what are these questions you are "afraid to ask me? (said she, with a smile so full of benevolence, as might have conciliated the affections of an angel, or stopped a devil in his progress of mis-

chief—but it did not stop Mr. Andrew Solemn)—“What are they, Sir, being
“already established in my good opinion,
“as a gentleman and a man of understand-
“ing, you have as little reason to fear my
“displeasure, as I have to apprehend you
“will go a step beyond the boundaries of
“perfect good manners, in the questions
“you mean to propose, and I am really
“impatient to give you every proof you
“may require of my confidence.”

“Your Ladyship is all condescension;
“the nature of my business, it is true,
“does not entitle me to *such* distinguishing
“marks of your goodness—but, Madam,
“men of *my* profession, must endeavour
“to acquit themselves with impartiality—
“not the virtues *even* of a Lady Auberry,
“though they have the *highest* claim on
“my veneration, must *bias* me to follow
“the *lead* of my inclinations, rather than
“perform the disagreeable task I have un-
“dertaken for my client.”

“Sir

“ Sir Ashton Montague—there does not,
“ in my opinion, exist a more worthy,
“ *honourable* man than Sir Ashton; how-
“ ever, he might have been misled by
“ wrong information; which this *amicable*
“ conference with your Ladyship will, I
“ *hope*, enable me to do away, to the satis-
“ faction of all parties.”

“ Pray, good Sir, no more apologies;
“ you have raised my curiosity; what are
“ the commands you bring me from Sir
“ Ashton Montague?—I have heard my
“ late son-in-law had such a relation, but
“ have never seen his person to the best of
“ my recollection.”

“ Yet, doubtless, your Ladyship must
“ have *heard*, that had Colonel Montague
“ died without issue, the Baronet was next
“ in the entail, and six thousand pounds a
“ year, Madam—”

“ Well, Sir, I allow six thousand pounds
“ a year (interrupting him with a sort of
“ ironical pleasantry), is not a matter to be
“ despised, even by a gentleman, who has,

“ I am told, three times as much of his
“ own—such an addition might have added
“ to his weight in the senate, and brought
“ with it many *other* advantages, if Colonel
“ Montague, when he married my daughter,
“ Lady Mary Pledell, had not impeded
“ his views of aggrandisement, by
“ leaving an infant, who not only inherits
“ under the settlement, there being no bar
“ against females, but also by the last testament
“ of her father, who had the right of
“ bequeathing the moment he had a child
“ born alive; and *these* are the *only* obstacles
“ in the world that I know of, which
“ can possibly prevent *your* client from
“ dispossessing *my* Grand-daughter: and
“ now, Sir, I wait your further communications.”

There was a dignity in the person, and a spirit of animation in the eyes of this wonderful woman, at the age of nearly fourscore, more adequate to the purpose of creating reverence than inspiring affection; if the humility of her soul, and the

the placidity of her disposition, had not thrown over them the more engaging graces of meek and feminine softness—this fascinating veil had, by accident, slipped a little from its usual station, as she was talking to Mr. Andrew Solemn.—Now this *professional* gentleman had a trick of sometimes looking on the ground, as any other *contemplative* genius may do, when he is to encounter no very contemptible adversary; and that adversary happens to be a person whom he *has* injured, or *intends* to injure. Mr. Solemn found himself in the very *act*, and having fixed his sight downwards, whilst Lady Auberry was speaking, he did not choose to be at the trouble of raising it any more, as long as he continued in her presence.

“ Yet (said he) I hope to be the means
“ of accommodating this *little* misunder-
“ standing, to the satisfaction of all par-
“ ties.—Was your Ladyship present when
“ the ceremony of marriage was performed

“ between Colonel Montague and Lady
“ Mary Pledell ? ”

“ Do you come here, Sir, to *dispute*
“ the validity of their marriage. ”

“ By no means, Madam ; my utmost
“ endeavours shall be used to substantiate
“ the *fact*, and to disabuse my client, who,
“ as I hinted before, must certainly have
“ suffered himself to be *imposed* upon—
“ reports, Madam—reports are *ugly* things
“ —much *mischief* often results from re-
“ ports. ”

“ You are perfectly incomprehensible,
“ Sir ; *how* has Sir Ashton Montague been
“ imposed on, and *what* are the reports
“ by which you *suppose* he has been de-
“ ceived ? ”

“ Such as it is always in your Ladyship’s
“ power to silence—Lady Auberry cannot
“ be without authentic *vouchers* of her
“ daughter’s marriage, and the *birth* of her
“ Grand-daughter. ”

“ You must speak still plainer, Sir ; I
“ am passed the age, when the acuteness
“ of

“of imagination can supply the defects of
 “language; what I demand from you is
 “information, *unequivocal* information.”

“First, permit me to assure you, Ma-
 “dam, that after the polite reception you
 “have honoured me with, my *delicacy*
 “revolts at the thoughts of saying any
 “thing that can give *you* displeasure; yet
 “what am I, in this disagreeable business,
 “but the agent of another; was I acting
 “officially for my own interest, I would
 “reign *all* my pretensions, *however* fan-
 “guine, *rather* than be the object of *your*
 “resentment for a moment.”

“Nay, Sir, do not fear; my resent-
 “ment will fall on either yourself or your
 “employer: if Sir Ashton can *possibly*
 “conceive, that he has been plundered by
 “*me*, he has a *right* to seek redress; and
 “you, as a very able lawyer, have a right
 “to *support* his claims. I feel nothing but
 “curiosity to know on what foundation
 “he has built them upon, and expect to
 “be gratified with the fullest satisfaction

“on this point, that it is in your power to give me.”

“It appears, Madam, by my client’s instructions, he has lately received *certain* information, that there *are* circumstances attending the supposed union between Lady Mary Pleydell and Colonel Montague, which, if *established*, may render the *validity* of such a marriage doubtful.”—He paused.

“I pray you, good Sir, do not *suppose* that I am in my *dotage*; do not treat me like an *infant*; I have yet enough of external strength and internal fortitude remaining, to support me under these *weighty* circumstances, or to cast the burden of them from me; to blow down all Sir Ashton’s airy schemes, with as much ease as I could brush away the manufactory of that *poor* spider, who you may see at this moment outside my window so busily *spinning* his *web* in the sun-beams.”

“There

“ There is no doubt—it cannot admit of
“ a doubt—at least to me, Madam—that
“ your Ladyship is provided with *ample*
“ proofs of refutation; *but* yet I must say
“ in behalf of my client, whilst there is a
“ chance, a *possible* chance that your Lady-
“ ship may have been *deceived*, it will be
“ *justice* to acquit him of *intentional* dis-
“ respect, even on the very score of self-
“ preservation, and the duties *every* man
“ of *honour* must owe to his succeeding
“ generation, that none of *their* lawful
“ property shall be laid *waste*, or *relin-*
“ *quished*.”

“ Upon my word, Mr. Solemn, I
“ thought I was speaking to a mere *lawyer*,
“ but I find you a *special pleader*.”

“ I wish to make every thing *agreeable*
“ to your Ladyship, yet *not* to neglect the
“ interest of my client.”

“ And you succeed mighty well in your
“ *first* wish; for what is there *more* agree-
“ able to the ears of a *proud* and *happy*

“parent, than to be told, in the most *flattering* and *delicate* terms, that it may not
“be *impossible* to prove *her* daughter was a
“*prostitute*. I believe, Sir, when divested
“of all *superfluous* expressions, *such* to
“be the *whole* meaning of your business
“with me.”

“I am shocked—surprised—confounded—would Lady Auberry—I say Madam
“—would your Ladyship shew less offence
“at my *honest* intentions, I might—I
“should—I trust it may be done—I would
“convince Lady Auberry with what profound respect—I am her most obedient
“humble servant.”

“Of that I am already so well convinced, Sir, that I shall desire your immediate return to Sir Ashton Montague, with this message from the Dowager Countess of Auberry, that though she does not choose to give *his* agent any
“*private* information, respecting her *domestic* affairs, she has *no* objection to a
“public

“public *investigation* of them, whenever
“she is summoned to answer him in a court
“of justice.”

Lady Auberry rose from her chair—so did Master Andrew Solemn; she bent her knees, he bent his eyes still more firmly on the carpet; she preserved the haughty silence of insulted virtue, he of conscious detection; she pulled the bell—a servant shewed himself at the door—“Or—
“der this gentleman’s carriage.”—“It is
“ready, my Lady.”—“Very well—my
“servant waits to conduct you, Sir; I
“wish you a pleasant journey;”—and having forgot her ebony headed cane, that lay on the window-seat, she passed into the next apartment with the alacrity of a nymph, and the dignity of an empress, while the mortified lawyer made his exit at the opposite door.

He had it not in his instructions to make a forcible entry on the premises, and being commanded to quit, he, with his fallow visage, considerably lengthened,
made

made the best of his way back to the place from whence he came, to relate his interview with the stately mistress of Riversdale castle.

The design of this visit being rather to give than receive intelligence, there could not be much of disappointment in its consequence. To trample under foot honour—justice—humanity—if they stood in the way of interest, was no crime; but to offend against the laws of politeness was unnecessary: and it was for the sake of politeness merely, that Lady Auberry was apprised of Sir Ashton Montague's intentions to destroy the fame of her daughter, and the fortune of her Grand-daughter.

Not to have given her notice of the impending mischief, but to let it come upon her too abruptly, would have been uncivil, and incivility made no part in the composition of Mr. Andrew Solemn.—Sir Ashton Montague, though not so much the votary of *etiquette*, consented to his taking the journey, because, he said, it
would

would insure the applause of the world; and without the world's applause, his good fortune would lose half its value. Mr. Solemn convinced him how necessary it was, that every body should cry out, how nobly the right heir conducted himself to the suppositious heiress, in allowing her so long a time to prepare for her defence—he was convinced—and will not all men run after popularity, when they are sure there is nothing to be lost by the pursuit.

The great practical abilities of this eminent professional man shall never be buried in oblivion, as long as I, whose right it is to hand down *such* characters to posterity, am thought worthy to be the historian of his successful *rambles* through all the labyrinths of confused *mysteries*, and to engrave with my pen how successfully he has made his way out with safety; whilst any body, less skilled than himself in the turnings and windings, had infallibly been lost to *fame*, to *honour*, and to *reputation*.

Nothing

Nothing could equal the astonishment of Mr. Sandford, and Miss Beauley, when Lady Auberry told them who her visitor was, and the purport of his visit; both were actuated by the same sentiment, and exclaimed in the same moment—What a villain!

“And to what end (said her Ladyship, “with her usual composure), mischief is “certainly intended, but the motive for “it is past finding out; what have *we* to “fear, what have *they* to hope? Have not “I the license, the certificate, and the “will? Have *they* any thing to bring forward that can invalidate *my* claim, and “substantiate their own?”

“Your Ladyship, I hope, (said Mr. “Sandford) will allow me to go immediately, and bring hither your attorney.”

“For heaven’s sake! (added Miss “Beauley), let him be sent for.”

“I submit, to quiet *your* alarms (replied “Lady Auberry), though I have none of “my own.”

Mr.

Mr. Sandford waited for no further permission, but set out directly for the house of Mr. Harvey, who lived only about a mile from Riversdale, and finding him at home, they returned together in the short space of twenty-five minutes.

This lawyer had neither the education, abilities, nor splendid family connections of Mr. Andrew Solemn; yet was he nevertheless very much distinguished for knowledge in his profession, soundness of head, and integrity of heart.

Lady Auberry coolly, deliberately, and distinctly repeated to him what had passed in her conversation with Sir Ashton Montague's man of business, and asked his opinion, on what grounds he supposed it possible a suit at law should be instituted against her Grand-daughter.

"I know of none (he replied, with a bluntness natural to his character), provided your Ladyship has taken care not to let out of your own possession the certificate of Lady Mary's marriage."

"I have

“ I have that safe enough, and another
“ of the dear child’s being made a Chris-
“ tian; both these sacred ceremonies were
“ performed in this very house, by the
“ Bishop of S——; and I have also my
“ son Montague’s will, by which he dis-
“ poses of all his possessions to this, the
“ only child of their marriage.”

“ Then (said he), my Lady, I will
“ defy the devil himself to set it aside.—
“ Has this will ever been recorded?”

“ No; I have thought it unnecessary,
“ my inclinations did not lead me to town;
“ and as there is no legatee but herself,
“ it is time enough to prove it in the Com-
“ mons, when she comes of age; or if it
“ is never done, she is equally the uni-
“ versal heiress of her father.”

“ I know it (said he, after a moment’s
“ consideration), and I also know it must
“ be on this very circumstance, that the
“ heir male has built his expectations; he
“ has searched for this reputed will of his
“ cousin, and not finding it registered, ac-
“ cording

“ cording to the usual custom, he has per-
“ suaded himself to doubt its existence :
“ his next object is the invalidating a mar-
“ riage, which would still more effectually
“ humble his hopes of succession; and the
“ well-known fact, that the late Earl died
“ uninformed of his daughter’s marriage,
“ or the birth of his Grand-daughter, has
“ doubtless led him into the error of sup-
“ posing it will not be very difficult to bear
“ the issue of such a union: besides, I dare
“ say he does not fail to calculate on other
“ chances—in the distress of losing Lady
“ Mary, he hopes, no doubt, that your
“ Ladyship might have neglected to take
“ care of those *proofs*, which I am happy
“ to find you have so carefully and pru-
“ dently preserved.”

“ I will put them into your hands this
“ moment (said Lady Auberry)—Go, my
“ dear (turning to Miss Beauley), and
“ bring the little casket in which they are
“ deposited; here are the keys of my India
“ cabinet; you will find it in the third
“ drawer

“ drawer on the left hand;” and then added, kissing the cheek of her ready messenger, “ You will forgive me that I
“ send you upon my errands, it is your
“ own fault; if you did not put me so much
“ in mind of my precious Mary, I should
“ treat you with more ceremony, but *then*
“ I should not love you so well.”

“ God bless you, dearest Lady Auberry,
“ for thinking my small attentions worthy
“ to be ranked with those of Miss Montague:” saying which, she flew to execute her commission.

This casket, formed of agate, mounted in gold, was soon placed before Lady Auberry; she was drawing the key from one corner of her purse, where it lay snugly wrapped up in silver paper; whilst every eye was employed in examining, every tongue in admiring the beautiful toy, in which had been placed the important vouchers.—“ Here (said she, presenting
“ the key to them), is something as well
“ worth your observation, as the casket
“ itself;

“itself; the whole was a present from my
“son Montague, for the very use to which
“it is dedicated; and this key has never
“once been in the lock since I made the
“last valuable deposit; try how the wards
“will turn, Mr. Sandford; I feel myself
“a *fool*, and the operation is *too* much
“for me.”

He did as she desired—it turned with perfect ease—the lid opened with a spring—it suddenly flew back, and, *horrible* to relate, it was as barren of contents, as when it first came out of the artificer’s hands who made it!

Consternation took possession of the astonished circle, and shewed itself in a sad variety of silent woe; the fortitude of Lady Auberry forsook her for a moment; her head sunk back on the chair—her eyes closed, and her hands fell lifeless by her sides; the eyes and hands of Mr. Sandford were lifted up to heaven—Miss Beauley threw herself at the knees of the venerable victim of a set of wretches, whose villany
was

was now but too fully explained—the honest lawyer stood with his mouth half open, his eyes fixed and stretched to their utmost extension, his hat had dropped from one hand, his cane from the other, and both were extended in an attitude of amazement.

“What is to be done? (said Lady Auberry, forcing herself to rouse from the effects of a blow, that had nearly felled her to the dust); *must* the fame of my *fainted* daughter be tarnished! *must* the birth of my angel Mary be stigmatized with disgrace! What is to be done, my friends, to save us from *these* calamities?”

“Yes, there is a possibility (cried Harvey); perhaps, Madam, you may have moved these papers from the place where you first put them.”

“Never, never; I have never seen them: I have not opened the casket, since the day my darling received baptism from the hands of the Bishop of S——.

"S——. Oh! why, why did that cruel
"Bishop ever prevail on me to authorise
"the marriage."

"Is his Lordship yet in existence? (asked
"the lawyer)."

"O no; no, he has been dead these
"twelve years."

"Are any of the witnesses living?"

"There were but two, and they are
"gone to record it in heaven."

"Rot it, that is cursed unlucky (cried
"the provoked lawyer, forgetting that he
"was speaking to a Dowager Countess)."

Mr. Sandford walked about the room,
agitated beyond description; Miss Beauley
sat on the carpet by the side of Lady
Auberry, holding one of her hands, and
wetting it with her tears.

"I have a thought (said Sandford); I will
"go this moment to *end*, or *ascertain* my
"suspicion;" in five minutes more he
was mounted, and galloping down the
avenue.

When

When the spirits are depressed, when hope is extinguished, and the tortured soul wrapped in the dark mantle of despair, the smallest ray of light, where no light is expected, acts with resplendent glory, and illuminates the dreary prospect; such an effect did the sudden departure of the good chaplain produce on the minds of the melancholy circle he left behind him.

“ He is gone (said the venerable Grand-mother, with returning vivacity of countenance and voice); he is the servant of God; he is gone on an errand of mercy, and the God of mercy will lead him to detect this combination of villany.”

“ I wish we had *one* living witness (replied the man of law); how happened it your Ladyship was not present at the nuptials of your daughter?”

“ It was she, it was herself that prevented me—the angel wished to screen me from the vengeance of her father, if her union with poor Montague should be discovered.”

He

He shook his head. "It was a most unlucky precaution," was all his reply.

"Then you have *no* hopes, Mr. Harvey; I *see* you have no hopes, and my Mary *must* be a beggar?"

"God forbid (whispered the gentle, affectionate, sympathizing Niece of Lady Jane Petworth)! have I not *ten* thousand pounds of my *own*, and shall I not divide it with the dear injured Miss Montague?"

These kind words were uttered so softly, that they escaped the notice of Lady Auberry, but met the ears of Harvey, who acknowledged that he had received by them a look of infinite approbation.

"Yes (continued the agitated parent), it *must* be so; I see all the consequences of this complicated plan of wickedness—*that* sentence which disinherits her from the estates of Montague, cuts off all her claims to *those* of Auberry—and *who* are *they* that seek thy destruction, Mary?—Who are *they* that turn robbers to undo
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“ thee?—Who covers thy head with disgrace?—Who would strew the poison of infamy over the ashes of thy dead mother?—Are they not thy *nearest* relations? are they not *those* who should have guarded thy *orphan* sweetness?”

Feeble was the voice which pronounced this apostrophe; but so pathetic the look by which it was accompanied, that it pierced to the very soul of Harvey, and he rushed out of the room.

Miss Beauley, dissolved in tears, darted from her humble situation on the ground, and threw her arms about Lady Auberry, whose head fell on her bosom.

“ These emotions, my child (said the gracious sufferer, striving to comfort her young friend), are a sort of cannibals, that will feed on our own vitals, if we do not contend against them; let us then (erecting her person, and lifting up her pale face, majestic even in anguish), let us conquer these enemies, that will otherwise conquer *us*, and leave us nei-
“ ther

“ther sense nor reflection to baffle our
“misfortunes, or fortitude to support
“them.”

“Can you recall, Madam (asked the
“lawyer, who that moment returned with
“only one drop of commiseration rolling
“down his rough cheek, which he had for-
“gotten to wipe away)—can you call to
“your remembrance, my Lady, the names
“of those servants who have been em-
“ployed in any station whatever, that re-
“quired their attendance in your own
“chamber, since the period of your
“daughter’s marriage to the present time?
“Some of them *must* have been bribed to
“*steal* these papers, and it may not yet be
“*too* late to bring them to confession.”

She shook her head: “Alas (said she),
“what a forlorn hope is that, to which
“you would have me look up for redress!
“In eighteen years, my good Sir, who
“can say how many inferior servants have
“had admittance to these apartments? Some
“of them are dead, and all the rest dis-

“perfed over the face of the earth, God
“knows where!”

“But, my Lady, the *deed* has been
“done by somebody; and your *upper* fer-
“vants are, in *my* opinion, much more
“likely to have been *tampered* with, than
“your chamber-maids—your Ladyship’s
“woman, for instance.”

“Of their fidelity I have no doubts, Mr.
“Harvey—I am answerable for it, and
“will try to convince you that it *cannot*
“be any of *them* who have robbed me—
“you remember poor Martain, ſhe died
“but a few weeks ago.”

“I do, Madam; ſhe was a *truly* good
“woman; there can be no doubt of her,
“I believe.”

“As little is there of *Liffey Lifter’s* being
“concerned in a *plot* of treachery againſt
“her *benefactreſs*—Liffey ſucceeded to the
“place of Martain, when I made that
“dear woman my friend and companion,
“as the reward of her maternal attention
“to my beloved Mary—Martain had
“adopted

“ adopted this girl; she was the daughter
“ of her cousin, and to *her* she bequeathed
“ all the little fortune she was enabled to
“ save in my family—Is not this more than
“ a *supposititious* testimony to the establish-
“ ment of her honesty? But had I wanted
“ a better security than Martain’s partiality
“ for her, I would put you in mind, that
“ this young woman, after living with me
“ ten years, married my house-steward,
“ the boy Boden, whom I took from a
“ charity-school, and whose attachment to
“ *me*, I am well persuaded, will never end
“ but with his life.”

“ These are strong presumptive proofs,
“ Madam; but *whenever* we find the thief,
“ depend on it, my Lady, we shall meet
“ with him *under a mask*—and who did you
“ take in her situation, when Boden’s wife
“ went home to live with her husband?”

“ The same who lives with me now.”

“ A *very* respectable woman (said Har-
“ vey). I did not know Mrs. Bailey had
“ lived with your Ladyship so many years.”

“Then you have no suspicion of her being an accessory to my wrongs?”

“No, I have not: but, Madam, are these *all* the servants you have had about your person, for the last eighteen years?”

“All: and these, you cannot but allow, are none of them objects for our suspicions to light on.”

“That is true, my Lady; but when every thing that should be sacred is at stake, we must rest nothing on supposition; and if they *are* innocent, they will have no objection to attest their innocence.”

“What do you mean, Mr. Harvey?”

“Every servant *now* living, or who *has* lived in your Ladyship’s family, gentle and simple, that are within *our* reach, must be put to the oath.”

Miss Beauley, who was looking out at the window, her eyes fixed, but not distinguishing one object from another, even not so much as to see the kind-hearted chaplain,

chaplain, as he galloped up the avenue, till he was almost at the entrance, now cried out, clapping her hands, with an exclamation rather of expectation than joy, "Oh, thank God! thank God! here is Mr. Sandford, and he is bringing somebody behind him on the same horse."

"It is Samuel Estrige (said Lady Auberry, with a disappointed air). Where can Mr. Sandford have picked up that boy? What use can we make of him?"

Miss Beauley told her what had passed at the cottage that morning, about the message left by Dame Estrige, with her son Samuel, to be delivered to her Ladyship; but before she had quite finished her tale, Mr. Sandford came in, leaving Samuel outside the door.

Having explained, that the motive of his abrupt departure was to fetch the lad—he said, "they had met on the road, and that he had taken him up on his own horse, not more for the sake of expedi-

“tion, than to secure him from the enemy,
“who might be still lurking about the
“neighbourhood, and silence his evi-
“dence, if he had any thing of conse-
“quence to communicate, which I believe
“may be the case (added the divine);
“for on my stopping him, and asking
“whither he was bound, he said he was
“going to carry a message from his poor
“mother to my Lady, concerning of Miss.
“I bid him get up behind me; and these
“are the only words that have passed be-
“tween us—Have I your Ladyship’s per-
“mission to introduce him?”

“By all means (returned Lady Auberry)
“—I *would* be sanguine if I *could*, but I
“have no hopes *indeed*; I have no hopes
“from *that* quarter.”

Samuel was a youth of three or four and twenty, of a wholesome, comely, open countenance; by trade a joiner, and worked by the day under so severe a task-master, that the hours he had that morning dedicated to the last offices of filial piety,
were

were stolen from the very few allowed to him, for the refreshment of sleep, and cessation from bodily labour—At noon he had the disposal of another hour, it was the hour of dinner, but the performance of his duty was a more grateful repast to Samuel; and he flew to the cottage of his mother—where finding he came *too* late to see her *living*, he thought the best way he could testify his love for her memory, was to execute her orders from the bed of death—he therefore made all the haste he could towards Riversdale, resolving rather to forfeit his whole day's wages, than his obedience to the commands of the dead.

Samuel had no terrors when he was brought by Mr. Sandford into the presence of Lady Auberry; he was often admitted to that honour, and had received many marks of her condescension, as well as of her bounty.

Having said much to comfort him for the loss of his mother, and permitted him to give a free vent to his natural, but rather

noisy lamentations, she desired he would be composed, and tell her the message Dame Estrige had left in charge with him, to deliver after her decease.

“Mother did call it her *confusion*, an’ please you, my Lady (said the awkward youth, dashing off, with the back of his hand, the big drops that rolled down his florid cheeks); go Samuel, said she, and make my *confusion* to her Ladyship, or I shall never die in no peace at all: these were mother’s last words: I am certain sure I shan’t never forget them; nor how piteous and pale the poor soul looked when she talked about her *confusion*.”

“He means *confession* (cried Lady Auberry to Harvey, whose whole attention was fixed on the young man)—*surely* we are not to hear that the *nurse* of my Grand-daughter has any share in this *treacherous combination*.”

“We must trust to no *appearances*, Madam; *facts alone* are what we must endeavour

“deavour to come at—*substantiated facts*—
“we have no *other* resource in *law* or in
“*equity*—Your Ladyship must get the lad
“to explain himself as well as he can,
“whilst it shall be my business to *find out*
“his meaning, when I have got it on
“paper.”—This passed between themselves, Samuel heard nothing of the matter; but being ordered by Lady Auberry to proceed, and not to omit the smallest word that his mother had said to him, in which her Ladyship or any part of her family were concerned, he yielded ready obedience.

Before he began, Mr. Harvey placed himself at a table, on which were pens, ink and paper; his back was to the narrator, that he might not be thrown into a fit of shyness, by observing that all he said was immediately committed to writing by the lawyer; which had he known, might have added much perplexity to his mother's *confusion*, by increasing his own.

In something less than half an hour he had completed his information, and was dismissed with a gratuity, more proportionate to his *good* will than to any *actual* service that could be derived from his communication, of which the following is an extract from the minutes of Mr. Harvey.

Samuel Efrige *sayeth*, " that on the
" 14th of February, 17— *three* gentle-
" men and *one* lady came out of a coach,
" and entered the cottage of Dame Efrige,
" one of whom she believed to be Mr.
" Boden, whom she knew very well some
" yearsback, when he lived as steward at Ri-
" versdale; the other two she had never seen
" before, to the best of her remembrance—
" and she likewise *verily* thinks the lady
" who came with them, was *Lisssey Lister*,
" my Lady's *late* woman, and *now* the
" wife of said Boden; but when she chal-
" lenged their recollection, they told her
" they were strangers, who had never been
" in

“in *that* county before, but had heard
“much talk of *her* cottage, as well as of
“the *castle*, and the strange story about
“the beautiful *parish girl* that was nursed
“by *her*, and afterwards adopted by the
“Lady Auberry, who was willing that the
“world should suppose it was her *own*
“Grand-daughter—and they further said,
“that it was to know the *rights* of all these
“*reports* from herself, that they came to
“pay her a visit before they left ——
“shire.”

Samuel further *sayeth*, “that Dame
“Estrige, inflamed to passion by the re-
“proach thrown out against the *birth* of
“Miss Montague, whereby she was called
“a *parish girl*, and not the Grand-
“daughter of Lady Auberry, quarrelled
“with, and very much abused her *said*
“*visitors*; that the woman, whose face was
“covered with something black, which
“hung from her bonnet, brought her to
“good temper again, by saying, *they must*
“have been *imposed* upon.—Being thereby
“pacified,

“ pacified, she told them the whole truth,
“ from the *first* day she received the child,
“ under the name of Mary Wilson, to the
“ *last day* of her nursing it, when she gave
“ her up to Lady Auberry, by the name
“ of Miss Mary Montague, her Ladyship’s
“ Grand-daughter—Samuel further *sayeth*
“ for his mother, that the woman with the
“ black frill dangling from her hat, seemed
“ much troubled, because of the scandal
“ that was every where about in the coun-
“ try where she came from, concerning
“ Miss Montague’s being a *parish girl*;
“ and asked Dame Estrige if she would sign
“ to the truth of what she had *told* them,
“ that when they returned back to their
“ *own* town, they might be able to convince
“ *every* body of what they were *now* them-
“ selves *fully* convinced, that Miss Mon-
“ tague was *not* a parish girl, but the true
“ Grand-daughter of the Lady Auberry:
“ to which Dame Estrige, thinking it for
“ the good of the young Lady, readily
“ agreed—That the man whom she did always
“ believe

“believe to be *Boden*, asked her to write
“down what she had *told* them; but say-
“ing she was no better scholar than to
“make her mark, the *same* man said he
“would do it for her; and having wrote
“*two* sides of a paper, which he took out
“of his pocket, as also a pen and ink from a
“black case, he afterwards did read to her
“all that he had put down, and actually
“in the true words she had been telling
“them; with which she said she was satis-
“fied, and they then shewed her where to
“make her mark; whilst the two other
“gentlemen set their hands to it as wit-
“nesses, saying, *they* would take care, and
“soon turn the tables on those who went
“about telling a parcel of lies, that none
“but fools would believe; they could now
“contradict them all from good authority,
“from under the hand of the young lady’s
“own nurse; after which they were very
“civil, and would have given her money;
“but she refused to take it, saying, she had
“done no more than her *duty* to her dear
“young

“ young lady, who was a perfect angel, in
“ speaking up to her *good* name.”

Samuel Efrige further *sayeth* for his mother, “ that she did believe she was bewitched, and that after these people went out of her cottage, by reason she could get no rest night or day, and fell away, and was so bad, that she could not go to Riverdale, till my Lady sent her coach to fetch her; that when she did go, though fully purposed to tell my Lady what she had done, the spell came over her worse than ever, and tied up her tongue, so that for her life she could not speak a word about the matter, not so much as to confess that she had been sick.”

Samuel Efrige further *sayeth*, “ that on going to the cottage of his mother, this present day, being the 27th of April, 17—, he found her in a dying condition, when she related to him all the particulars recited as above; that she wept forely—told him that she had sent for
“ the

“ the Reverend Mr. Sandford, and the
“ young lady who was staying at Rivers-
“ dale, that she might make her con-
“ fession to them before she departed; be-
“ cause she had not enjoyed a moment’s
“ peace since she signed her mark to the
“ paper; for, though nothing was read to
“ her, but the truth of her own story, word
“ by word, she did verily think, that it
“ was *Boden* and his wife, late *Lissey*
“ *Lester*—who must have known every
“ thing about the matter as well as she did,
“ and her being bewitched ever since, did
“ make her verily believe, all was not fair
“ and above-board—taking on piteously to
“ see his Reverence, and tell him the folly
“ she had committed.”

Samuel further *sayeth*, “ that when the
“ gentlefolks went away from the cottage,
“ Dame *Eltrige* heard them say one to
“ another, as unobserved she followed them
“ to the coach—*This will do*, it will be *down*
“ with her *now*—from which moment she
“ found an alteration in herself, and prayed
“ Miss

“ Miss Montague might not have suffered
“ by the same witchcraft, asked God and
“ my Lady’s pardon for her ignorance in
“ making her *mark*, as *they* could have had
“ no power to overlook *her*, if she had
“ not first done as they bid her.”

Such was the purport of Samuel’s report, rendered into as intelligible language as his manner of relating it would admit.

Lady Auberry, instead of finding her hopes flattered by his communication, felt her despair increase at these new and mysterious appearances—for when divested of superstitious *conjectures*, she saw in the nurse’s *four* visitors, the artful agents of Sir Ashton Montague; and in *their* management of the simple old woman, additional nets of close-woven mischief, spread for the destruction of her Grand-daughter.

“ Is there any thing to be made out of
“ this boy’s evidence?” said she to Harvey, as he sat motionless, with his eyes fixed upon it, after it was finished.

“ Nothing

“ Nothing in the world (he replied)—
“ it is all *hearsay*—but go to your dinner,
“ Madam, you have fasted too long al-
“ ready; leave this hellish business to me;
“ nothing that *can* be done, shall be omit-
“ ted—make no enquiries *what* steps I am
“ *about* to take, but expect me to-morrow
“ —*to-morrow* will decide for *us*, whether
“ we shall *save* all, or *lose* all.” He rose
up, put the paper in his pocket, and
hurried out of the room.

The remainder of the day was passed by
Lady Auberry, and her anxious friends,
in a state of suspense that may be better
imagined than described. Miss Beauley
considered that there yet remained a *possibi-*
bility, that the papers might have been re-
moved from the casket, and prevailed on
the depressed parent to trust her with the
keys of every cabinet, and every drawer
in her possession; all of which were rumma-
ged and re-rummaged by the agitated en-
quirer, but without success; she felt the
certainty of Lady Auberry’s misfortune,
and

and returned to her more dispirited than before.

"I do not ask you, my dear, if you bring me *good* tidings (said her Ladyship); I am but *too* well convinced your search *must* have been to no purpose."

The charming girl delivered back the keys with a mournful countenance, and speechless acquiescence.

"Neither (continued her Ladyship) have I any *more* sanguine expectations from what Mr. Harvey's *efforts* and *tomorrow* will produce; but God forbid I should have so far out-lived my reason, as not to face an *honourable* danger with fortitude. Mr. Sandford, will you ring the bell, for our coffee? Dinner has been a short unsatisfactory repast; we all want additional refreshments to recruit our spirits."

When mirth brings her jocund family together, how short appear the dancing hours of festivity, and how loth are its children to separate from each other! This
fort

sort of predilection for social conviviality is the natural result of good health, good spirits, and unclouded prospects: but where are we to look for the fond *incentive* to fellowship, when we find it amongst the infirmities of age, the oppressions of malice, and the victims of misfortune, unless it be in the sweet sensations of *sympathy*?—Whoever does not allow it to be of sufficient force to keep Lady Auberry out of her bed till past midnight, in conversation with her chaplain and Miss Beauley, for such was the case, must find out a better reason, *if* they can—for I have *no* better to offer them. One word more before I close my subject.

Friendship is an ecstatic composition of harmony—Whether the human mind is disposed to be sad, *or* to rejoice, its tones are alike musically soothing—Grand in its designs—noble in its effects—it relieves our cares—shares our hopes—abates our fears—doubles our joys—divides our grief. He who relates his successes to a friend,
talks

talks himself into a *new* pleasure—and by *speaking* of his misfortunes, he leaves a part of them behind him.—Friendship, like some *universal* medicine, works contrary ways, but always to the advantage of nature.

Conversation such as Lady Auberry enjoyed with her chaplain and Miss Beaufey, on this memorable evening, might be called the drawing out and disciplining the whole strength of her internal force; the more she spoke to them on the subject of her wrongs, the more her ideas were inspired with new vigour, and her reason supported by fresh reinforcements: in the language of confidence there are many salutary hints, which, like the collision of hard bodies, make the soul strike fire, and the imagination sparkle.

Now I am well *aware* that many of my female readers will *abuse* me, and cry out, O Lord, Mrs. Gunning is writing about great people, of whom she knows nothing in the world, or it would never have entered her head to make the *parson* a gentleman;

tleman; and *then* dub him the *friend* of Lady Auberry, in whose family it was impossible he could be of any more consequence than the *house-steward*, *maitre d'hotel*, or groom of the chambers—Had she been *one of us*, she would not have *misrepresented* our *established* customs so egregiously, as to say, that we make *companions* of our *domestics*—a mighty natural *trait* indeed of high life—she only exposes her *own* ignorance, and *must* convince every body who reads her book, that she was never admitted to any table, where this sort of grace-saying *dependant* is retained, or she would have known, that *they* always *come in* with the dinner, and *go out* with the dessert—Then she draws characters, and pictures of *us* on the same *pretended* foundation of knowledge—An ill-natured *purring* old *cat*—how should she know to describe *women* of *quality*, when it is plain enough the creature has never been admitted into *our* circles?

“ There

“ There you mistake, Madam; I lived
“ in the *very* heart of them *many* years—
“ but as one may have too much of a *good*
“ thing, I retire myself from *such* society,
“ with the humble hope of making my
“ lessons *useful* to your grand-children, who
“ it is *likely* may stand in need of a *little*
“ more instruction than you have *time* or
“ *inclination* to bestow on them.

“ I must also set you right in point of
“ the blunder *you* think I have made, about
“ the chaplain—it is no blunder at all—
“ ignorance has not hurled me headlong
“ into error. Mr. Sandford did hold
“ *friendly* converse with Lady Auberry—
“ I know what your established customs
“ *are* well enough, and would feign tell
“ you what they *ought* to be: with this
“ view I have put the observation in your
“ mouth, merely to have the pleasure of
“ making you the retort courteous.

“ Whoever considers the priesthood as
“ lessening the *dignity* of man, or *degrading*
“ to

“to the importance of his *station* in life,
“*must* either believe all religion to be im-
“*posture*; or, if they do *own* the being of
“a *God*, the character under which they
“figure him, is so *scandalous* and *unworthy*,
“that I think it would be a kindness to
“suppose *them* Atheists, who treat his *name*
“with irreverence, his *service* with dis-
“respect, and his *servants* with contempt!

“If you like my doctrine, it is well—
“if you follow it, still better—but should
“you turn from it, as not worthy your
“attention, I will modestly appeal from
“*numbers* to *reason*; where, if the cry is
“still against me, I will *say* I have meant
“*well*, I have done well; I will think *so*,
“and *reward* myself—To creep after ap-
“plause, is a servile and a precarious gra-
“tification.”

It is now time that I should return, and
knit together the thread of my story.

When Mr. Harvey left Riversdale,
having first taken down all the intelligence
he could get out of *simple Samuel*, he pro-

ceeded immediately to a friend of his, who acted as a justice of peace; from whom he intended to procure, with profound secrecy, two warrants, for taking into custody Judas Boden, and Lætitia his wife, on suspicion of their having stolen, and privately conveyed away certain papers belonging to the Right Honourable Dowager Countess of Auberry.

Now, though the characters of both these Bodens had hitherto been held in much respect within the walls of Riversdale, outside that sanctuary they were treated with *less* ceremony, and *more* truth; many cunning, paltry actions, of which they stood justly *accused*, had reached the ears of Harvey, and together with Dame Elstrige's dying words—that she did *verily* believe them to be *two* of the *four* persons who came in a carriage to her cottage, made him suppose, they came there with no good intent, as they evidently had denied their *own* identity.

Whatever

Whatever were their villanous plans of mischief that had begun to shew themselves against the honour, the peace, and the interest of Lady Auberry and her family, he could not but perceive they were at the bottom of them; and the haste with which he had left her presence, proceeded from his fears, that if she discovered his intentions, they might meet with a dangerous check from her extreme candour of mind, and the partial favour in which she held the objects of his suspicion.

On leaving the breakfast room, he had a short conference with Mrs. Baily, her Ladyship's woman; by whom he was informed, that a little time before the death of Mrs. Martain, the companion of Lady Auberry, Boden's wife was brought by her husband to Riversdale, where she continued some days after the interment of her relation.—Very officious Mrs. Baily observed her to be on this occasion, in attending on her late Lady—one night in particular she sat up by her, when her Ladyship was much indisposed, owing to

the shock she had sustained in losing her confidential servant—In the morning, when Mrs. Bailly went into the room, her Lady was fast asleep; and she was informed by Boden's wife, that her Ladyship had rested so well, as not to have once awakened; at which account she was rather surprised, as Lady Auberry was at no time a good sleeper; but naturally enough accounted for the alteration, as well as for her not waking till eleven o'clock the same morning, by concluding the apothecary had mixed some sort of opiate to quiet her nerves, and compose her spirits, in the draught she usually took at bed-time: but when she asked him the question the next time he came to Riversdale, he assured her nothing of the kind had been administered by him.

“Damn the forcerers (cried the enraged lawyer)! she first laid her asleep, and afterwards robbed her: curse me, if I don't make an example of them! But say nothing, my good woman, to your
“Lady,

“ Lady, of what has passed between ourselves.”

He had ordered out his horse when he first came down ; a groom now led it round to the steps. Harvey was an elderly, heavy man, but vaulted into his saddle with the alacrity of a youth, the lightness of a Mercury, and flew down the avenue with the speed of a race-horse.

Mr. Archer, the justice of peace, to whom his first application was made, lived but a mile from Boden’s snug habitation, which was by far the best house in the parish—the *next* best belonged to the village attorney—the *third* to the curate—the *fourth* was dignified with the sign of the *Bee-hive* ; and the *fifth*, consequently occupied by the justice :—the justice was an honest man—by birth a gentleman—by education a scholar—by good-luck, comfortable—by nature, a humourist—by disappointments, a misanthrope—and by inclination, a bachelor.

On a garden chair, that he had nailed together with his own hands, from roots of trees and odd-shaped sticks, which came recommended to his taste by unnatural excrescences, was this complicated being reposing at the door of the fifth best house in the parish; when Harvey dismounted outside the wicket, flung the bridle of his horse round the post, and made his unexpected appearance before the justice.

His worship was no friend to ceremony—the lawyer had no time to bestow on it;—they shook hands, sat down side by side—when the latter told the former, in a few words, that he was come to fetch a summons for two of his neighbours, whom he should soon bring before him, if he was lucky enough to find them at home, and could put his hand on an officer to lay hold of them.

“Is not one of them Boden?” asked the justice.

“Yes (said the lawyer), and the other

“is

“ is his wife ; but what made your mistrust
“ my business was with them ? have you
“ heard that I suspect them of being con-
“ cerned in a robbery ? ”

“ No ; but I have long enough known,
“ that he is up to every species of mischief ;
“ rot the fellow, he is so insolent, so over-
“ bearing, and troublesome, that a hun-
“ dred times I have wished him a sheep-
“ stealer, that I might send him out of the
“ parish.”

“ My good friend (eagerly exclaimed
“ Harvey), can you inform me if he has
“ lately had any visitors to him from Lon-
“ don ? ”

“ I have not the honour of his ac-
“ quaintance (replied the other), though
“ he has condescended to signify his *sur-*
“ *prise*, that the *only* gentleman in the
“ neighbourhood with whom *he* could as-
“ sociate, had not been to *visit* him ; and
“ I sent the blockhead word, that when
“ I wanted to *hire* a servant, if he could
“ bring a *good* character from his last
I 4 “ place.

“ place, I might possibly let him hear from
“ me—He is a damned rascal, and fattens
“ on the money of the poor, who would
“ rot in a ditch, if I did not occasionally
“ send him *my* orders to relieve their ne-
“ cessities.”

“ But, Sir, Mr. Archer (cried the law-
“ yer, impressively and impatiently), to the
“ question, to the question—though you
“ do not *visit* him, you might have heard
“ if he has had any *fine* people at his
“ house, who came flourishing away in a
“ carriage.”

“ The devil a one have I heard of,
“ neighbour, either *here* or *there*; I do not
“ believe there has been a carriage of any
“ sort this half year, that has staid in our
“ village longer than to change horses at
“ the Bee-hive, except *one*, which a few
“ weeks ago brought down some powder-
“ headed puppies, who gave themselves
“ airs, as if they were come to purchase
“ Sir Timothy Tomkin’s estates; but after
“ picking their teeth two days at the public-
“ house,

“house, they departed, as I am told, without going over a foot of the land.”

“Zounds, it will do, man (shouted the lawyer)! these must be the very brace of villains I was asking you about.”

He was eagerly asked for an explanation—a confidential explanation followed, to the utter astonishment of the almost incredulous magistrate—He, ever whimsically disposed, had not left the smoke of his own chimney since he came to settle in that country, except to attend divine service, a duty he never omitted, and of course was not personally known at Riverdale: yet was he infected with the partial influenza of kindness, which spread itself through all the regions round about that hospitable mansion; and whilst the names of Auberry and Montague were familiarized to his ears, the encomiums with which they were followed, opened a passage to his approbation, so that his heart might be said to have venerated those his eyes never beheld.

Entering as warmly as the lawyer himself into the situation of the unhappy family, he proposed sending for the host of the *Bee-hive*, to get what intelligence they could out of him, before they proceeded any farther in the dark affair; and in a few minutes the landlord made one of the party.

“Richard (said the justice), I sent for you, to know how your stock of old port holds out, and if you can let me have two or three dozen of the *right* fort?”

“Lord save your Worship (replied *Bonniface*), I have no more in the world left, of what your Honour is so *funny* to call the *right* fort, but only two bottles.”

“Why, what the dickens hast thou done with the half pipe from which I got my last supply? Poured it down thy own funnel, I suppose; or it might have lasted twelve months, for all the wine-drinking company thou entertainest.”

“Formerly,

“ *Formerly*, to be sure, your Honour,
“ the Bee-hive was not what it is *now*—
“ then a dozen, instead of half a pipe,
“ would have done the job; but *now* times
“ are mending, every bee brings its
“ honey, and we shall weigh well, master,
“ at late season.”

“ I am glad to hear it, with all my heart,
“ honest Richard; and shall like to know
“ how all this good fortune is come
“ about.”

“ Why, in the first place, your worship,
“ there is 'Squire Boden and Madam, they
“ be come to like my liquor so well, that
“ instead of sending twenty miles off for
“ their wine and spirits, they have them all
“ now from the *Bee-hive*; they drinks very
“ *brisk*, and pays well—Then, *your Honour* is
“ as good a customer as one would desire of
“ a summer's day.—Mr. Pace about, our
“ lawyer, and Parson Paul, have a dozen
“ or so *now* and *then*, besides chance
“ comers.”

“*Chance comers!* you have not many
“ of them, I believe.”

“ The *worse* my luck, 'Squire—I likes
“ *them* that drinks at my house, and orders
“ their biddy with their bottle, more bet-
“ ter a great deal than sending my liquor
“ out—it was not passing a month ago, that
“ three special London chaps came down
“ here on a frolic; and though they staid
“ no more than two days and a bit, their
“ bill com'd in that short time, and as
“ honestly charged as any publican could
“ have charged it, without hurting his con-
“ science, to fifteen guineas.”

“ Fifteen guineas! (repeated Harvey,
“ who, with a pretended air of surprise,
“ now for the first time broke through his
“ political silence)—then, I suppose, they
“ must be men of consequence, with plenty
“ of attendants?”

“ Bless your Honour, they had no more
“ attendants than the back of my hand,
“ except an old coach, in which they posted
“ all the way from London.”

“ Then

“ Then they lived well, and entertained nobly, I warrant ?” said the justice.

“ Like sons of thunder, your Worship—
“ not that they were given to company-keeping; nobody came near them, but
“ ’Squire Boden and Madam, who shewed them all over the country, and said they
“ were come to buy Tomkin’s farm: but,
“ however, I heard no more of that matter, as long as they staid at the Beehive; all I troubled myself about, was
“ to get the belly timber ready by the time they came back; and if your Honour will
“ believe me, it cost out of my own pocket two guineas a day, in sending to
“ market for all manner of rarities; and
“ as to my *best* port, as your Honour talks so much about, they sucked it away like
“ mother’s milk.”

“ As they had no horses (said Harvey, carelessly), I suppose they always walked
“ when they went out with the ’Squire and
“ his Lady, to view the country?”

“ All

"All but once; and then they said I
"must get them a couple of cattle; so I
"borrowed Farmer Bell's grey mare, and
"our coal-carrier's black gelding, because,
"as they went steadily in a cart, there was
"no fear they would draw the coach well
"enough.—He who seemed to be the head
"gentleman turned coachman, and drove
"the other two, the 'Squire and Madam,
"who all rode inside, to go about and see
"prospects."

"Can you recollect the day you borrowed the horses to accommodate this
"jolly party?" asked Harvey.

"Why, as sure as I live, master, it was
"the fourteenth of February; I remember
"it, by reason that it fell out on my own
"birth-day; and when I went the day
"before to borrow the cattle, I asked the
"farmer and Black Jack to take a tiff of
"punch with me gratis, to drink my
"health; besides paying them the price of
"a whole day's work for the mare and
"gelding."

Mr.

Mr. Archer enquired, if he could not tell the names of his late guests?

“Not cleverly (he replied) because
“why? they never said before me, that
“they was called by any names at all;
“only once I did hear *he*, who seemed to
“bear the biggest sway, and to be head
“over all, say to another of his comrades,
“when he tossed a boat of gravy over the
“table-cloth—Rot you, Simmons, what
“are you at now? I remember *that* was
“his name, by the reason I know a very
“*honest* tanner of the same—He who spilt
“the gravy was a little tight man, well
“put together, and looked as bold as a
“captain, but said nothing at all, only
“begged pardon, rubbed his hands, co-
“loured as red as fury, like my wife
“when she is in a passion; but it was all
“for fear that he had given offence to his
“betters.”

Nothing further was to be got from the communicative host of the Bee-hive, and the justice dismissed him, with an order for something

something in his own way, which recompensed his trouble of attendance,

The two friends now consulted together, what was the next best step to be taken; it being perfectly understood, that these three men from London must have been the very set who, with Boden and his wife, paid a visit to the cottage of Dame Estrige, on the fourteenth of February; and it was *as plain*, that, if the heir at law to the Montague estate was not of the party himself, these travelling *gentry* were no better than dependent scoundrels, employed by him to act in the lower departments of frauds and deceptions.—It was also evident, that the Bodens were leagued with them in the same treacherous business;—the old nurse in her last moments had declared, that the man whom she believed to be Boden, did draw up a paper, to which his wife prevailed on her to set her mark, and that it had been witnessed by the other two men who came with them out of the carriage.—This was
a clear

a clear case ; but what the *real* contents of this paper could be, was a question they asked each other, with as little chance of information, as if they had been enquiring the time of day from a deaf man, or their way through a labyrinth from a blind one : —at last it was agreed, that the lawyer should first go to the house of Boden, whilst his friend made out the summons, and procured a proper officer to serve them with it—and then to bring them before him for examination.

Away went Harvey on foot across the fields, with a sound oaken cudgel in his hand ; a precaution any honest man may take, when he is going to bring himself into contact with a villain.—As he walked in a row of elms, he met with a girl carrying a milk pail on her head towards the house, which was now in view ; he accosted her, with a “ Good evening to you, pretty “maid!” and asked if she lived with the ‘Squire, the only appellation by which
the

the 'Squire chose to be known through the village.

"To be sure I does (said the simple wench), when they be at home; but now I don't live with them, because they be gone away."

"And where are they gone to?" cried the lawyer, in a tone of vexation.

"Somewhere, I supposes; but they did'nt tell. They only said, when they went off this morning on horseback, that I need not set up for them, as they should not be at home all night; but cautioned I to keep the windows shut, to go to bed betimes, and not let no idle fellows come lurking about; so I hope you will now be so civil, as to go about your business."

He was inclined to smile at her polite audience of leave; but the thoughts of Lady Auberry, and the agony of suspense in which he had left her, reverted on his memory—he lifted up his heavy cudgel, and

and let it fall again to the ground, so forcibly, that the girl cried out, "Mayhap
"you be a little beside yourself—mayhap
"your sweetheart won't have you—Jack
"Turnstile drowned himself for love of
"I, and the neighbours did all say, that
"he was as mazed as a sheep, or he never
"would have gone to put an end to his life
"in that manner of ways; but I hopes
"you don't intend for to do no such a
"thing?"

Before he could make a reply to this tender-hearted supposition, or turn back from the house, at which he was nearly arrived, what objects should start upon his sight, coming out of a lane on the right hand of the high road, but the identical people he came in quest of!

His companion gave a shout of awkward astonishment at their unexpected return, and, without taking any further notice of him, ran into the house.

Harvey stood observing them, where he could not be seen by them—A servant in livery

livery assisted his mistress to alight, then went towards the stables with the horses—Boden walked into the garden, and his wife into the house, whither Harvey followed her—before the girl found time to set down her milking-pail, and shut the door after the 'Squire's lady had passed through it.

Her face was, as Dame Estrige had described it when she came to the cottage, covered with a black veil, that hung from her hat, so that she did not immediately see who it was that accosted her with, "*Your servant, Madam;*" but his voice was recognized with less difficulty, and she received him very courteously, yet appeared in great haste to send for Mr. Boden; which he would not permit her to do, saying, he had an hour to spare, and *she* could give him all the *entertainment* he wanted, till her husband came in; but begged she would take off her hat, or he should think he was talking to her through a wall; and nothing was so great a treat to him,

him, as the meeting with an old acquaintance *face to face*.

“ Indeed and I shall do no such thing,
“ Mr. Harvey—I have a redness in my
“ face, and my eyes are so weak, that I
“ would not be seen for all the world
“ without my *curtain*.—I will hook it up
“ with a pin, if that will satisfy you.”

She drew it up a *little*, yet not enough to give him more than a *peep* at her eyes—
“ This will never do, Madam, I am not to
“ be put off with so *small* a portion of your
“ *engaging* countenance.” And he raised it still higher, though with some resistance on her part, which had a greater tendency to *coquetry* than *displeasure*; for there is *this* faculty in flattery, that it will make even impertinences *shine*, impossibilities *seem* credible, and turn poison into the *elixir* of life.

“ I have been at Riversdale to-day,” fixing his eyes steadily and sternly on her as he spoke.

“ O laws! and how does the charming
“ old

“old Lady?—I hope you bring me good
“accounts of her health.”

He shook his head. “It might have
“been better, Mrs. *Liffey*—I beg your
“pardon, Mrs. Boden, I mean :—I say, it
“*might* have been better, if, in your *great*
“attention to procure her sleep when you
“sat up with her after the decease of
“your relation, you had not given her too
“*heavy* a dose of that confounded opiate.”

The lawyer was a shrewd man: he knew
when it was best to make a gradual de-
scend, and when to advance by surprise—
Had he told her, You *have* given lauda-
num to Lady Auberry, she would instantly
have *denied* the fact; but by insinuating
that she had administered *too much* of
it, she was thrown completely off her
guard. In her eagerness to exculpate her-
self from the charge, contending for the
quantity of the medicine, she fairly allowed
of its *quality*, and cried out—“*Why*, I gave
“her but twenty drops, as I hope to be
“saved.”

“That

"That was no great matter, to be sure;
"and yet the doctors do say, we owe all
"our present *distress* to its operation."

"Why, she is not dead, I hope?"

"Not absolutely *dead*, but in a very *bad*
"way."

"L—d G—d, how you terrify me, Mr.
"Harvey! indeed now, and I thought you
"was come to tell me it was all over with
"my dear Lady."

"Faith, Mrs. Boden, if *your* nerves
"are not better than my own, what I have
"to communicate will afflict you ten times
"more than the *death* of Lady Auberry."

"Law, Sir, I am so frightened, you must
"let me go and call Mr. Boden, or I shall
"faint."

"You do not stir from hence, Madam—
"if you are for fainting, air is the only
"remedy." And he almost forcibly removed the hat which still concealed the change his discourse made on her features, too much for the purpose.—"I
"thought (said he) you complained of
"being

“being troubled with a red face, and I
“find it as pale as chalk.”

“It is all your fault,” (replied she),
hanging down her head, as he held her
trembling hands to prevent her running
out of the room—“I took you for a civil
“gentleman; but you are no better than a
“Hottentot, to come into people’s houses
“and terrify them out of their senses; but
“I have a husband, who shall call you to
“account for this impertinence.”

“Suppose I *prove* to you, that I come
“on the most *friendly* errand to save *you*
“and that husband, with whose resentment
“I am threatened, from public exposure,
“public infamy, and public execution!”

Her complexion no longer bore any re-
semblance to chalk, but flamed with the
fury of more internal convulsions than
ever agitated the bowels of Mount *Ætna*
before an eruption—she raved at Harvey
—she screamed for her valiant help-mate
to come and turn him out of the house,
but all in vain: her voice was smothered

in

in rage, and its extension confined by agony.

“ Woman, (said he) forcing her into a
“ chair, and standing before her, I will
“ yet save you, if it be possible, *even* against
“ your inclinations. — You *acknowledge*
“ that you gave laudanum to Lady Au-
“ berry, but you have not told the *whole*
“ truth ; the same means that discovered
“ to her family your having administered
“ the sleeping potion, has also cleared up
“ the occasion for which it was admi-
“ nistered. — Do you *remember* the little
“ key that you drew from her Ladyship’s
“ purse, whilst she was under the influence
“ of *your* prescription ? — Do you *recollect*
“ another which you took from her pocket
“ at the same time ? — Have you forgot
“ how your hand *trembled* as you opened
“ the cabinet — how you *started* as you
“ laid it on the casket — how you *looked*
“ and *listened* whilst you stole from thence
“ those fatal papers, the loss of which, has
“ destroyed the peace of your *benefactress*,

“and reduced her Grand-daughter to beg-
“gary. There was an *eye* that *overlooked*
“you as you committed the theft, and you
“have no way to escape, but by making
“restitution. Give me back the papers,
“or tell me where you have conveyed
“them, and he who saw you may probably
“remit your punishment.”

“It is false, (cried she), with more ve-
“hemence than caution—*he* did not see
“me—*nobody* saw me—nobody was up in
“the house, but myself.”

Boden now stalked into the room—the voices of his wife and her visitor, by this time at their full bent, had reached him before he got within the door—a guilty mind is soon panic struck; something was amiss, but he could not tell what: think ye he was afraid to contend with any bully of his own inches? No; he would have tussled with a bruiser, or knocked an honest man on the head whose back was turned, with as much calmness as he would pass by him.—On such occasions he was a hero—

hero—but to *face* a professional adversary, one equally practised in the science of *honor* as in the laws of *equity*—one who he *knew* to be the neighbour, the friend, and the attorney of Lady Auberry, produced sensations contrary to heroism, and when he heard the voice of Harvey, he felt himself a *daftard*.

He considered for a moment whether he should quit the place or proceed to combat—his hypocrisy was as *consummate*, as his deeds were *atrocious*; and when he played the *villain*, he would borrow from his disguise the placid composure of established *virtue*; the cloke was always at hand, and covering his confusion with it over head and ears, he was approaching towards the lawyer to take him by the hand, and express the pleasure his presence gave him—when his wife, breaking from her confinement, flew to him as if to take shelter under his protection, and proclaimed in accents of terror, that Harvey had scared her out of her senses, by taxing

her with having poisoned and robbed her dear old Lady.

“ Here must be some mistake, (said he),
“ putting her gently aside.—My good Sir,
“ I am glad to see you with all my heart—
“ I am sure my wife has been alarmed
“ without your giving her just cause to
“ complain, and that your intentions are
“ friendly.”

“ The most so in the world, (he replied),
“ and I have been explaining them to
“ Mrs. Boden.”

“ Indeed, and so he has, my dear ; do
“ you know, he says we shall both be
“ hanged, if we do not give back the pa-
“ pers.”

She was suddenly interrupted, by Boden's commanding her silence—his impudence and studied ease forsook him—his stubborn limbs shook under him—his eyes started from their orbits—the veins in his forehead filled with liquid crimson—his broad mouth, which at all times resembled that of a *John Dory*, became extended
from

from ear to ear, and was garnished with a complicated grin of apprehension, cowardice, and malice. It was his ambition to enjoy the *profits* of vice, without encountering the *discipline* of ignominy—he trembled at the words of his spouse, and saw that her extreme folly was bringing him on the brink of detection.

“Lissey, (said he), what *nonsense* are you talking about; Mr. Harvey has only been *jesting* with you.—What murder hast thou committed, poor girl—and what papers hast thou stolen from Lady Auberry?—You that have not seen her Ladyship this six weeks—you *know* you never gave her any thing to *take* when you was at Riverdale—and you *know* we have no papers of *her's*, or any other body's, but what belongs to our *own* business.”

“And so now I told him; but he said I was watched, and he had got a man to swear, that I took the keys out of my

“ Lady’s pocket, and stole the certificate
“ of Lady Mary’s marriage to Colonel
“ Montague, and the will and the certi-
“ ficate of Miss Montague’s christening.”

“ Did *you* say *this*, Sir, he asked in a
“ menacing attitude? If you *did* say it, you
“ are not the gentleman I took you for,
“ and desire you to quit *my* house imme-
“ diately.”

“ I really did not give in a *list* of the
“ *papers* that are missing, said Harvey,
“ calmly; and I am obliged to the *memory*
“ of *your* wife, for *calling* them over, as
“ well as for having *exactly* specified the
“ number of *stupidifying* drops she admi-
“ nistered to Lady Auberry, before she
“ could get at her keys. I think, Madam,
“ if I remember right, you said they were
“ no more than twenty?”

“ What! (cried Boden), darting fresh
“ fire on his fiery-faced consort—have you
“ been telling a parcel of damn’d *lies* that
“ may bring my neck to the halter?”

“ Laws!

“Laws! sure you don’t believe I would
“be such a fool, my dear.—I’ll take my
“oath, I never said the words.”

“And will *you* take *your* oath, Sir, that
“you did not go to the widow Elstrige, at
“her cottage near ———, on the four-
“teenth of February, in company with
“three other men and this lady of *veracity*,
“and when *there*, under false pretences,
“got her to set her *mark* to an instrument,
“of no *good* meaning to the orphan daugh-
“ter of the late Lady Mary Montague.”

Both cried that they were ready to take
their oaths.

“Come with me, then, (said Harvey);
“since you will send yourselves to the
“devil, the nearest way is to the justice.”

They eagerly seized what they thought
would effectually clear them from all future
suspensions, and followed him across the
fields, to the residence of Mr. Archer:
in their way they passed the constable of
the parish, who was going to wait on them
in his *official* character; but the lawyer

made him understand, by some silent gesture, that his interference was unnecessary; and he pursued his way onwards, pulling off his hat as he went by, and wished them a good night.

Harvey's intentions in conveying them without noise or exposure before Mr. Archer, was, with the hope, that when their forces of rhetoric were united, they might be successful in bringing them to confession, the only means by which he foresaw any stop could be put to the impending destruction that must otherwise, for want of proof, be established, without *reference* or *appeal*.

Alas! instead of gaining the point, for which he laboured, they acquired in their short walk so much more presence of mind, than they had experienced under their own roof, that those advantages he had gained by *surprise*, were lost by *deliberation*. The whole charge was not only denied before the magistrate, but they even insisted on being put to the solemnity of an

an oath; for no other reason, but to clear themselves to their honoured Lady, *who*, they were sorry to find, had been worked upon by *evil-minded* people, to suspect *them* of such wicked and treacherous actions.

Threats—arguments—praying—preaching, were all in vain; dashing through thick and thin, they would go to the devil their own way: the oath could not be refused—it was therefore administered, and they went back to their own habitation, washed as white as *perjury* could make them.

Oh! with what curses were they followed by the friends of honour, of innocence, of Lady Auberry, and of Miss Montague.

The Justice struck his pipe against the table, and dashed it in a thousand pieces.

“It is all over (cried Harvey, in a tone of lamentation), the powers of hell have conquered.”—He called for his horse, turned aside his head as he passed by the

gates of Riversdale—went home to his own house—sat down in his office—searched over all his books of law for precedent cases—wept when he could find none that gave him hopes of keeping possession, without one single evidence to produce in favour of his clients—went to bed supperless—got no sleep the whole night—rose early—unrefreshed, fatigued, miserable—and when the hour came that he thought he should be expected at Riversdale, he bent his course towards it with as much *anguish* of soul, as he probably would have felt for himself, had he been going to his own execution.

Gentle Reader, I cannot afford to keep you any longer at Riversdale, as I have just heard from my publisher, that he is ready for the fifth volume, and the fifth volume is not ready for him; instead therefore of describing the scene at large, that passed between Lady Auberry and her friends, on the complete destruction of whatever little hope might yet have lingered

gered in their anxious bosoms, I must contrive to shorten the description, and content myself with assuring you, that, contrary to your expectations, her Ladyship bore the completion of her misfortune with true Christian fortitude; her rest was not disturbed by agitation, or her dreams made horrible by the midnight *phantasies* of a guilty conscience. I would further ask her oppressors, how *they* passed the night. I do not tell you, that her silver hairs were not moistened with the *dew-fall* of sorrow, after she laid down her venerable pensive head on the pillow of repose; but I can positively *assert*, that her *perfect* reliance on the goodness of an *invisible*, over-ruling Power, restored her in the course of a few hours, to humble resignation, calm reasoning, pious composure, and energetic fortitude.

As the strongest proof I am able to lay before you, how little exaggeration I have bestowed on this, my real character of *Christian heroism*, take some part of her

letter to Lady Jane Petworth, when made acquainted by Mr. Harvey, with the treachery of her late servants, who, to the guilt of having robbed her, had added the crime of perjury, the better to secure their hard-earned wages of iniquity.

Miss Beauley, at the request of Lady Auberry, had taken up the subject from the beginning, and brought it down to its latest date of that day; to which was added, in her own hand, what follows:

Here is a picture, my friend, that is terrible enough to petrify you with horror; I know it is well done, but the colouring, though it must be just, may be too strong for my decayed sight to dwell long on the subject; I therefore wisely turn away, and invite you to do the same. We have now seen the very worst that can possibly befall us; let us examine, and look abroad for better prospects: I offer myself to you, as your guide, and will point out to *your* observation a thousand pleasant peeps, which you will otherwise overlook, or else fancy
you

you cannot distinguish them through the foggy atmosphere of present misfortunes; but which if you will only look the way I would direct you, shall appear as plain, and as bright to you, as they do to my own eyes.

I am not going to preach up any *unnatural* philosophy; on the contrary, I allow that to be reduced from abundance to indigence is a *misfortune*.—There is *another*, infinitely more cruel, that must inevitably attend the first disaster; will not the same laws which humble the fortune of my Grand-daughter, cover the ashes of my Daughter with infamy? This *last* stroke is hard to bear. Alas! it is very hard: and yet, is there *no* inference to be drawn from comparison, to render the weight even of *this*, so fatal a consequence, not *only* lighter, but *almost* to diminish it to a mere nothing? There certainly is, and I endeavour to find it in this one consolatory reflection, that *actual* misery can have no foundation but in *guilt*. Shall we foolishly

ly complain that we suffer *wrongfully*; as if the punishment could be abated by the knowledge that we *deserve* to be punished; and is there no thanks due to the gracious arm of Providence, to whose protection we stand indebted for the preservation of our internal peace?—Innocence may be villified; it may be trampled in the dust—but its *nature* cannot change, its *peace* be destroyed, or its possessors unhappy.

I expect that you will hardly give me credit, though I am really dealing honestly with you—perhaps it may be more consistent with the weakness of human nature, to weep and lament over our sorrows, rather than coolly and deliberately to reason them away—yet for your *own* sake, cast as you are, in the very mould of sympathy, accuse me not of having acted the miser by you—do not suppose I am concealing a hoard of griefs from your inspection, of which I am loth to make you
the

the partaker. I have done no such thing; the sentiments I give you are the whole contents of my heart.

You are certainly, my dear friend, acquainted with what the poor tortured body seems to feel, when about to be separated from the divine spark, by which it has been animated: and did this reflection never strike you at the moment, that these tortures are permitted for the example of those, who are only spectators in the chamber of death, whilst the victim of his office feels an internal, invifible support, of which all around him are totally unconscious? I cannot help comparing *my* situation to *his*; all who hear of my afflictions, will cry out, *he must* sink under them—but I have *pleasant* thoughts, and pleasant *pre-sentiments*, that tell me I shall weather through them.

Not a word, if you please, to my darling Mary, or to her kind friends, the Duke

Duke and Duchess of Cleveland: of this business I am willing to spare them as long as I can. When I am called upon to relinquish *or* defend her claims, I know I must submit to the *one*, because it is now for ever out of my power to establish the *other*; and it will then be time enough to tell them, and the blameless child herself, that she has nothing to depend on but her *own* rectitude, and the poor efforts of her aged Grand-mother: the Duke is not yet, I understand, sufficiently recovered, for me to think, without more cruelty of heart, than, I thank God, belongs to me, of drawing off her personal attention from him; but whenever the curtain is withdrawn, which now conceals from her the truth of her situation, then I must recall her—in happiness I could do without her—in unhappiness we shall not be able to do without each other:—perhaps, when the time comes for disclosing all, you will have

have the goodness to conduct her to me—I ask a great deal, but not more than your liberal soul is capable of granting.

Here the scene closes at Riverdale, and opens in Arlington-street.

On the third day after the sudden flight of Mr. Lexington, we find his Uncle, Lord Francis Lexington, at the lodgings of Mr. Mellish, taking leave of that gentleman; whilst his travelling equipage waited at the door to convey him to Dover, and from thence to Paris, where his nephew had promised to wait his arrival.

What is happiness? has been a question of as long standing as the world itself, and perhaps as difficult to be defined as if one was to ask what was chaos before the creation of the world: but though Solomon himself could not discover it in all his researches, it was at last found out by a man, rather less wise than the royal prophet; and Lord Francis Lexington,

ington, from the moment that his nephew's union with Miss Montague was finally deranged, would have told him in his teeth, he was a visionary for *misnaming* substantial good to be no better than vanity and *vexation* of spirit.

Nothing less than the sudden indisposition of the Duke would have detained him twelve hours in town, after his *predestined* son-in-law had taken himself out of it:—this was a bar, that as long as his brother continued in a state of real danger, decency did not permit him to overleap; but the instant his Grace's symptoms were declared to have taken a favourable turn, his expedition commenced, being always prepared to seize on the first occasion that offered to enter on the double pursuit of his daughter, and a husband for his daughter—one who seemed to be snatched by the fates from the arms of another, merely to oblige his Lordship.

It

It would have added a good deal to the benefit of his plan, in *one* respect, if he could have made *Mellish* the companion of his excursions; because, though he should have the felicity of meeting with his daughter, how was he to know it was her, having never seen her since she was in a state of actual infancy; a circumstance that at first created a little difficulty, till the Consul, who was nailed down by state matters, and could not get away without the Minister's instructions, partly removed this dilemma from the mind of his noble patron, by giving him in writing such a description of the beautiful *Rosina*, as made it appear a more easy task than he at first imagined, to distinguish her from the rest of her sex:—one personal mark promised more than all, to be a leading clue to his success; it was a large mole on the right side of her neck, and level with the tip of her ear; which, if his Lordship had ever remarked, it had
entirely

entirely slipped his memory. Greatly rejoiced at the acquisition, he called it the leading star, by which he should direct his enquiries.

The reason of his stopping at the Consul's door the morning he sat out on his expedition, was for Mellish once again to examine over the catalogue of perfections attributed to Rosina, which neither admitting of erasures or insertions. He sat off in the highest spirits imaginable, not doubting that as Miss Montague was down, never to rise again.

His plan was this: to visit all the convents in France as well as in Italy, and to search every court in Europe, till he had found his *lost* treasure—if she was engaged in a *transient* connexion, and sometimes he supposed it to be her real situation, *that* would put no stop to his *paternal* intentions, which had only ambition for their shallow foundation. With these pious resolutions, he took his departure

parture from Arlington-street at eleven o'clock; and leaving him to pursue his journey, I returned to those letters which are to connect the remainder of my little unaffected history.

LETTER

LETTER XLII.

Sir Ashton Montague to Lord Auberry.

Bath, April 14, 17—

I AM sorry to hear you have parted with your pretty little Marchioness. You was a devilish—I do not say what, to give her up to another, merely because that other was her husband, and because she chose to go back to him, rather than continue with a lover, who is not only lost to her, but to himself, and to every thing that is dashing, figurative and sublime, in the hemisphere of gallantry.

What are these dronish accounts that I daily hear of you, my Lord; I thought
your

your good sense had, by this time, waisted you far above the errors of prejudice: did you not swear, when I was last in town, that the moment our grand scheme was executed, you should be yourself again? It is executed; you know it;—and with what neatness it is put out of hand, you also know—yet all the letters I receive are filled with your reproaches; *one* tells me, you wear shoe straps, when all the rest of the world are in buckles: *another*, that you go about without powder in your hair: a *third*, that you do not wash your face; and *all* agree, that you are nothing in the world but a downright sloven.

I am trying, Auberry, to put thee in a passion; all sorts of stimulatives are good in thy sluggish disease of stubborn negligence. Now, if thou hast a mind for a titting bout with any body *but* myself, who have been using thy name with more of fond pity than perfect respect, tell me so, and I shall send thee a list of all my
fair

fair correspondents; for it is only the lovely women that trouble their heads about your reformation; any, or all of whom, will, I take upon me to say, accept with courage a challenge from your Lordship, and be always ready to give you *honorable* satisfaction.

Do you suspect, my Lord, what is rumoured as the cause that I am nailed down to this place of ease and idleness; they tell me I am attached to your lively sister: it may be so—and if I have *your* consent to try my luck, I shall, without doubt, set about it at my first moment of leisure; at present, I must leave my *tender* interest to be settled by *others*, for neither *Miss Pledell*, or *I*, have any time to bestow upon it ourselves; as yet, we have only set the wheels of our machine on the go, and it still calls for our best exertions to keep them in motion; when the work is *completed*, I shall think of nothing but *how* to obtain *that* woman as my wife, whose talents are equal to the government

ment of empires; and that man for my brother, who I have already the honour to call my friend.

Possession's the word—we shall soon come to a division:—*I* the lands—*you* the lady;—you are too generous a fellow to grumble about a few dirty acres, which is *all* that can fall to my share; and the smiles of your charming sister shall be my security—that I do not envy you, my fair and pastoral cousin—it will be all amongst us, one way or the other, in the long run.

Cast off your gloomy habit of vapours, dear Auberry, and rub the rust from thy manly metal, which is of an excellent nature, though crusted over by caprice: there is so much folly, ill-humour, and monster in the composition of a hypochondriac, that I should be ashamed and afraid of the cursed ideas it engenders.

Why is it, my Lord, that you give Mrs. Oxburn so fair a field to torment me with compliments of your *neglect*; you

know she is our fast friend on a certain occasion: besides which, of all the lovely sex, she alone I selected as the best fitted for the *chère amie* of a disappointed man. If you will dash away the blessing I presented to you, do it with caution; she must not be mortified—we are too much in her power for that—flatter her beauty, and you will be her friend. A few small condescensions will cost you no pains—she is devilish handsome—you may tell her so, without fearing to crack your conscience, as a horse does his wind, by running against the hill.—Farewell; I shall not see you for three or four weeks to come, because I find I can carry on our business better in private than public; I expect that the winding up will be soon, and without trouble from those who are to account with us.

We have the honour of your name in the firm; but, after all, you are only a sleeping partner; take care then that you do not disclose the secrets of our trade in
your

your dreams; and for the active part I am answerable.

Remember me to the enchanting Oxburn—tell her that *I say* she has charms enough for a Venus de Medicis, and wit enough for the editor of a British newspaper; however, if you are inclined to give her something civil, in the same way, on *your own account*, it would be better received, and more to the purpose: have you heard of your own private affairs? Let me know how they go on, and once more **farewell!**

ASHTON MONTAGUE!

L 2

LETTER

LETTER XLIII.

Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auberry.

April 23, 17—

WHAT shall I say to you, dear—I had almost called you *celestial* Lady Auberry. In favour of human nature I retract the expression—you are *not* celestial; you are only animated by a greater portion of the Divine Spirit than other perishable beings.—The stream rises higher than the fountain, and the rebound is stronger than the first motion; so my passions are less subject to the controul of reason than your own; and the blow, which you meet with calmness, rebounds on me with the force of an electrical shock that confounds
my

my senses, and has nearly annihilated my existence.

What an unravelling is this to the mysterious conduct of Lord Auberry!—Sir *Ashton Montague* is guilty—the *other* cannot be innocent. The division of the *martyr'd* Mary's fortune comes between them—Can there remain a doubt, that the villains are leagued together in her destruction? I am not, like you, a philosopher by system; I have all the weakness about me of foolish precipitancies—I rush into torrents of rage, and sail down the ocean of perplexities, without rudder or ballast.

I would reflect on this horrid robbery with deliberation, if I could deliberate: but I have made the effort, and relinquished it, because, instead of bringing me comfort, reflection only shews me that Lexington's sudden and hitherto-unaccountable flight from happiness and his country, had its root in the detestable vice of *avarice*.—Yet, depend on it, Madam, he

was warned of the impending mischief, and fled from its consequences.—I have fully established the fact in my own mind, and he has forfeited my affection for ever.—Had I been his mother, I would have renounced him for an action so base, so unworthy. Was he not in pursuit of an angel?—devils stepped between them, *and* he deserted her.

I got my packet from Riversdale yesterday:—thank God, I did not receive it in the presence of your Grand-daughter. I felt a little alarmed, that it was not as usual directed, under cover, to the Duke.—The first lines on which my eyes were eagerly cast was, your Ladyship's *Christian appendage* to the very long and explanatory letter of my niece Beauclerk.—I will not tell you how exceedingly ill I behaved on the occasion; I should incur your censure, if I did—you would call me an infant, and tell me I deserve chastisement.

I was to have breakfasted in Grosvenor-square, where, since the Duke's indisposition,

position, I am always expected at eleven; however, so turbulent were my emotions after I had gone through the whole of my dispatches, that I did not bring my spirits into any sort of decent order to appear before the dear, interesting subject of my recent sorrow, till towards the hour of dinner.

The Duchess was in her dressing-room when I came; therefore I went directly to the Duke's chamber—found him alone, and sitting in his arm-chair by the fire-side. He is certainly a great deal better—I think he will weather this fit—but he still looks pallid, infirm, and spiritless. The thoughts of Lexington's unworthy relinquishment of his engagement to the beloved of all our hearts, it is plain to see, clings about his mind, and retards his recovery. We had a long conversation on the subject—the nature of which convinces me, you are in the right to keep the secret from him as long as we can; for, by her tender offices, and the *filial* concern which

is mingled with her unremitting attentions, she is become so exceedingly endeared to his affections, that I am sure, in his *present* state, a knowledge of the most distant evil that threatened to assail *her*, would be fatal to himself.—He is like a feather in the air, which the lightest blast of adversity would waft from our sight in a moment : when it does come, I hope he will have acquired more bodily strength to support the conflict.

You must not suppose that I sat an hour with his Grace, and forgot in all that time to make enquiries after your Grand-daughter.—I was guilty of no such omission. I asked for her—I remembered to name her almost as soon as I entered the sick room, where I expected to have found her. But I will tell you the truth—the effort was attended with a pang, which it cost me some pains to smother—her name, her idea, every thing that reminds me of her perfections and the villanous scheme agitating against her, shakes my whole

whole nervous system, and makes my feelings almost ungovernable. Fear not my want of caution—nothing shall throw me off my guard; I will obey your commands with exactness, though absolute suffocation should ensue.—The melancholy silence *must* be broken—Alas when!—too soon I know; but come when it will, the dreadful circumstances are in my hands—and if you appoint me your agent to disclose them, though I cannot wound, and at the same moment heal, as you do—though I cannot copy the dignity or the wisdom of Lady Auberry; yet, in administering all the soothing balms that sympathy possesses, I would not permit myself to be surpassed, *even* by Lady Auberry.

I never saw your amiable Mary look more beautiful than she has done for the last three days.—One would suppose the roses on her cheeks were forbidden to blow, when those she loves are afflicted or indisposed: for till she had reconciled Lexington to the Duke's favour, at least,

To far as to prevent him from making a will in his disfavour, and till she had heard his Grace pronounced out of danger from his late attack, the lily alone presided on her lovely countenance, and whitened in the languor of oppression.—That oppression is removed; there is nothing of sadness that remains, except when she is paying the tribute of a tear to the memory of her old nurse, or in speaking comfort to poor Jenny, who, under the patronage of so sweet a mistress, feels the loss of her parent with less severity, than she would probably have felt it in any other situation.

And this sweet Mary, who makes the sufferings of her fellow-creatures so much her own, as not to be capable of enjoying any sort of selfish *independent* happiness; this epitome of the divine essence, who willingly extends her benevolent influence far and wide as the powers of limited human pity are allowed to exert themselves. Is *this* to be the *stricken* dear? Is *this* to be the victim marked out for persecution?

There

There must be some great design in the womb of fate—God will not permit the treachery to proceed, or he will take singular vengeance on the infamous perpetrators.

Dear and reverend Lady Auberry, every thing that I can say to you on this subject is absolutely presumption.—Fools cannot deal out consolation to those who are wiser than themselves—and in that predicament I stand, when I submit to a comparison that must leave a multitude of other women, as well as myself, very far behind you in moderation, in piety, and in knowledge.

I tell you my own weakness, without reserve—and expect, from your *example*, to be not only strengthened, but comforted. You have a mode of extracting happiness, to which the chymistry of a bee is nothing : You suck the sweets, without impoverishing the flower, whilst *I* am making my voyage of life to little profit, and burning out my lamp in smoke and vapour.

The Duke and Duchefs still talk of making your Ladyship a vifit before the fummer is far advanced—in the courfe of a month, he fays, he hopes to begin the journey. What events may not happen in the fpace of a month? Be they good or evil, you will teach me how to fupport them. To you I looked up at an early period; to you, in my decline, I ftill direct my fenfes for inftruction.

I am almoft inclined to difpute *even* with you for an equal fhare in whatever concerns the welfare, happinefs, or intereft of our darling Mary. Let us be related by an act of courtefy, and fettle the matter at once. Your Ladyship is, in *reality*, her Grand-mother—give me the honour of being her mother by *adoption*. If you have the goodnefs to approve this arrangement, I fhall thank you for beftowing on me a confequence, for which, (however unworthy of fo dear a diftinction) I fhall never ceafe to acknowledge myfelf your moft grateful petitioner,

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER XLIV.

To Miss Beaully.

April 26.—

I AM about, my dear Niece, to enter with you into a secret, though not a treacherous correspondence. I have just finished a letter to Lady Auberry; in which, I have left unsaid something that I would not have her made acquainted with; hereafter I may have other communications to make you, the knowledge of which it might be better to conceal from her, whose sorrows are already out of all proportion to a heart so tender, a frame so delicate, and age so advanced.

All that you tell me of her heroism—all the proofs she has given me from her own hand of more than nominal resignation, even of active fortitude, does scarce allow
me

me to suppose, that it is possible she should be very long able to support the burthen of her trials—I rather fear she will sink under them.

I give you this painful necessary precaution, that we might hold ourselves in readiness to snatch from her cold bosom, and plant it in our own, that sweet and tender blossom, which, when the venerable trunk that now sustains it falls to the earth, will be left unsheltered, unprotected, perhaps scorned, insulted, and trodden under foot. Influenced by these sentiments, my Anna, I have this day given instructions for a codicil to my will; by which, I bequeath to you a sister, and divide my fortune accordingly.—I have no fear of your reproaches; on the contrary, I add to your portion of happiness *more* than I have taken from the scale of your property.

The secret reposed with you must go no farther—there is something in my intention which I am conscious would wound
the

the delicacy of Lady Auberry; and however well we intend, nobody has a right to make another lie under the weight of an imaginary favour; for as long as an act of kindness is only projected, and not executed, the obligation must be merely speculative.

O Anna! Anna! how has my heart been torn—what tears of bitterness have I let fall since the receipt of your last letter! Long have I loved Lady Auberry—long considered her as a being superior to the rest of human kind—Was the cloud of misfortune that is gathering over her head to burst on my own, I think I could bear it better than to stand in a sheltered corner and see the few remaining sands that are yet to run of her life deluged in affliction.

I know the storm *must* come—I look for it every hour, and fancy I can trace a fore-boding coldness in the few faces I have seen since yesterday. I have often thought it impossible, that any being, human

man, inhuman, or even savage, could be the enemy of Miss Montague, but I am deceived.

Since the Duke's illness, the newspapers have been thrown about upon the table, nobody read or opened them. I took three or four home with me this evening—in one of these convenient channels for anonymous assassination, and amongst the other articles of fashionable intelligence. to my inexpressible surprise, appeared the following paragraph in capital letters :

A ridiculous circumstance took place yesterday in a family of high distinction, not a hundred miles from Grosvenor-square.—The fact was this: A young lady, the Grand-daughter of a respectable Dowager Countess, being on a visit to a certain noble Duke, had captivated the heart of Mr. —, a most accomplished gentleman, and heir apparent to his Grace. She had spread her nets with much caution, but took them up with less circumspection.—The lady coquetted—the lover demurred—Yesterday the parties had a meeting—when in the presence

presence of all his noble friends, he renounced the honour of her alliance, bade her an everlasting adieu, and sat off immediately for the Continent.

Some *fair* designer, my dear Niece, works at the bottom of this insidious business.—I wonder if it is Miss Lexington, Maria, or Mrs. Oxburn—one of them it *must* be; the insertion is altogether *feminine*, and no other persons were present at the extraordinary interview who could so early have sent it to the editor, for it comes out on the very morning after the affair happened.

Already I see the darts of *envy* and *malice*, sharpening under the touchstone of mischief.—Mary is accused of being a coquette—what will they accuse her of next, I want to know? It is almost a pity that she should be young, beautiful, discreet, innocent, artless, unsuspecting;—will her youth, her beauty, her discretion, make friends of her own sex? I say they will have no such effect: it is only by the
candid

candid *few* these amiable qualities are respected: the malicious *many* shrink from them with disgust! there cannot be a crime of greater magnitude than to possess beauty, virtue, or talents of a superior sort; no mercy is to be expected from those who find themselves excelled.—Has her innocence preserved her from slander? I refer you to the paragraph before me: whoever charges her with coquetry, is a slanderer.—Has her delicate susceptible heart been *less* exposed to the impositions of the other sex, *because* it is artless.—Has she been treated by *them* more worthily, because her nature is unsuspecting? Has these virtues secured the constancy of her lovers? or will they disentangle her from the fraudulent snares of her crafty relations.—I am tired of asking myself questions, all of which might be answered in one monosyllable—No.

Miss Fortescue has not given me the trouble of sending her back to Windsor; but her aunt and cousins have taken her
off

off my hands;—I understand she is to spend some weeks with them; never was there a greater revolution than *this*—she really is not so deserving as I once thought or it would never have happened:—the haughty Marchioness was not the sort of woman to receive into her house an indigent relation; or the Lady Langtons to appear with a cousin who had pretensions to beauty, though none to fortune, without sufficient cause for their concession: one beaten road there is to their favour, and that she pursues.—To wrap her own perfections under a cloke of *nothingness* and *servility*, would be a poor sacrifice to the attainment of this great end.—She does more! she makes herself useful in demolishing the fame and the beauty of others, who happen to have too great a share of either.

You will think me unreasonable, my dear, if I do not tell you *why* I speak with so much severity of a girl to whom I was once so partial: you know my disposition,

position, and that I can make allowances for any failure of the human mind, except ingratitude and hypocrisy. Miss Fortescue is both *ungrateful*, and a *hypocrite*; every incident, every confidential or common conversation passing in my family has been immediately conveyed to her new friends, and laid out in that purchase which is now completed—the liberty to sit down at Lady Stars' table, and with Lady Stars' daughters, when ever she pleases.—My information of her treachery came from authority; yet I would not believe it possible, and said nothing about it: but having afterwards heard that she had spoke slightly of Miss Montague, for whom she expressed perfect admiration, and the warmest attachment, I told her what had been communicated to me, expecting she would vindicate herself from the double charge of *perfidy* to me, and *duplicity* to Mary. Guess then my surprise, when she replied to the *first*, that it was her duty to have no concealments to so near

near and tender a friend as her Aunt Stars; and to the *second*, that truly she did *think*, and might perhaps have *said*, that Miss Montague gave herself too many quality airs for her *present* situation.—I could not abuse any one under my roof, or dismiss her from it, with the disgrace as she deserved: I had taken her from her mother, and to her mother I wrote the next day, requesting she would come to town to receive back her daughter; pleading the Duke's indisposition, and my own necessary attendance in Grosvenor-square, as the reason why I could not hope to make my house any longer an agreeable residence to Miss Fortescue.—Her answer was full of acknowledgments, and signified that her daughter wished to accept of a very pressing invitation to pass a few weeks with her Aunt Stars, for whose *unexpected* attention she should always consider herself indebted to my goodness, and to the honour, as well as the particular advantage

tage of being permitted to remain so long under my protection.

Having read the letter through, I gave it to the impertinent girl, who looked it carelessly over, as if it had come from some body much her inferior:—when she came to the three or four last lines, she had the grace to blush; but whether it was called up by her *mother's* gratitude, or her *own* ingratitude, I am not accountable—she condescended, however, to add *something* to the civil side of the question; so that we did not part altogether as *enemies*, though we shall never again meet as *friends*.

I shall now dread the coming in of every post—I shall dread to open my next letters from Riversdale: such plans as infernals alone could have set on foot are seldom protracted;—the sooner their scene of villany is closed, the better will it be for dear Lady Auberry: evils which are unremediable, once admitted, soon grow familiar; and we contemplate them so often, till at

last

last we make them good for something; but when only advancing to take up their abode with us, and when suspense creeps on before, the preparations we make for their reception are terrible.—This, dearest Anna, is exactly the situation of your truly affectionate Aunt,

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XLV.

Sir Ashton Montague to Lord Auberry.

Bath, April 30, 17—

MY LORD,

I HAVE the honour to address your Lordship merely as a man of business; the title of *friend* must remain doubtful, till I hear from you; long silence is doomed incompatible with *my* notions of friendship, whatever it may be with your own; however, we will settle that matter another time.

My present intention is not to trouble your Lordship with advice, but to give you information.

Our

Our affairs are completed, as I expected they would be, without law and without trouble. I go in a few days to take possession; we must make up a purse between us of five thousand for *honest* Solemn; but as my share of the property is undoubtedly the largest, I shall take on myself to satisfy the demands of all the undertrappers. *Boden* and *Simmons* are well satisfied with my liberality; there are *many* more to whom I must come down handsomely; I shall think it well, if double the sum I have proposed for *Andrew*, brings me off with the others.

He did not return from *Riversdale* till last night, and too late for the post, or I should have given you instant information of our success. The reason *why* the demand has not been made *sooner*, I am going to explain.—My private expedition to —shire had taken air, and our visit to the old woman's cottage reached the ears of *Lady Auberry's* attorney.—The *Bodens*, half scared out of their senses at a

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menacing visit from a cursed lawyer, dashed off a brace of affidavits, and, knowing where to find me, came away to relate the lucky circumstance. I immediately sent express for Solemn, who, on hearing the whole matter, thought there would be danger, till these people were smuggled out of the kingdom. "It was possible, (he said) that if the enemy was to make another application, the man or his wife might be found in a more *compliant* disposition:" remarking, with his usual wisdom, "It was no proof, that those who had *once* stood, would *never* fall."

Sound doctrine this! I had nothing to oppose against it, but the difficulty of holding out any inducement strong enough to make them accept of *voluntary* banishment.

Andrew soon convinced me how easy it was for *him* to accomplish whatever he undertakes.

Entre vous.—Boden's wife is the greatest fool in nature, and must have betrayed us merely

merely by her folly, if the devil himself had not presided over our safety.

Johnson works in the same vineyard with our friend Solemn; one sows, and the other reaps. Johnson has large possessions in our Western Islands, and Andrew applied to his fellow labourer, who, at his instigation, very good-naturedly wanted a notable steward to reside on his plantations; which stewardship came to the offer of the Bodens, with so many advantages annexed; besides a considerable annuity granted by me on their joint lives, forfeited only by their returning to Britain; that they grasped at it, as a man would catch at the end of a rope thrown into the water to save him from drowning.

Thus, my Lord, we have cleared our hands, not only of two heavy incumbrances, but dangerous *confederates*: last Friday they sailed out of the river, and if they go to the bottom, it will not be without my full consent, and perfect approbation.

Solemn's next step, after seeing them safe on board, was to the town of ———, three Miles from Riversdale, from whence he sent a note to the Dowager Countess, requesting she would appoint at what hour the next day he might have the honour of attending her Ladyship, and receiving her commands, regarding the business on which she had before been consulted; a verbal answer was all that he received, signifying, her lawyer would be with him the following morning at twelve, to which hour he was punctual. After a good deal of conversation on the business, with which it is not material to trouble your Lordship, the matter was finally adjusted in *our* favour; Lady Mary Pledell's fortune, with accumulated interest, since the late Earl's decease, is refunded to you, and makes the round sum of thirty thousand. Now, my Lord, as you have thoughtlessly sworn not to touch this money, because it is Miss Montague herself, and not her money, that you want to secure

cure

cure, I think you can do no better than to throw the lump of dirty dross into the lap of your sister.—I should have some repugnance in advising you to this act of generosity, if I saw much prospect of having my *devoirs* accepted; but my success there is so very doubtful, that neither you, or my conscience, can accuse me of a selfish consideration.

How imperceptibly a man falls into old habits, and old opinions newly renounced. I began with doubting your friendship, and I am ending, as if I never had doubted it.—I thought I would not advise you to any act again as long as I lived, and I have been persuading you to perform an act of brotherly kindness, the merit of which your own enlarged heart must have pointed out to you before.—Now that I have broke down the bars between us, and that my confidence in you does not blow from a freezing corner, I can tell you some news, that will make you fall down at my feet, and worship me as your titular saint:

know then, that the charm by which you was bound, is dissolved, and Miss Montague, if you please, may now be your own. Ask me not *how* this matter has been effected—it is effected, and you are free.

Are your eyes yet open? Do you now see the thousand advantages which I have been striving to obtain for you? May I break my neck when next I set my foot in the stirrup, and go headlong to the devil, if all my contrivances have not been to serve you more than myself—that Mary, in whom your soul is wrapped, could never have been your's, Auberry, but for the diligence I have exerted to get you disentangled from the other affair:—she could not have been your's, if I had not disengaged her from the management of my family estates:—she could not have been your's, if I had not eased her of high birth, as well as brilliant fortune; it is the surface that dangles the senses; and whilst she considered herself the heiress of wealth, and allied to nobility, I'll be rot if she
would

would have turned her face to any man in the world, who had first slighted, next forsaken, and last of all insulted her: but, by my management, you will find her in another humour. Mary, the daughter of *nobody*, owned by *nobody*, slighted by *every* body, without a shilling to save her from starvation, she will be too much honoured in the revived addresses of Lord Auberry, to raise up romantic, fantastical objections, in opposition to her own interest;—no, the thing is as good as done. What wrongs will she have to complain of? None—your rank enobles her, and your fortune is sufficient to make all your children princes and princesses, if you should have a hundred of them.—Go to, then—never tell me that *you* or *I*, or *Solemn*, or any of us, have wronged her. We only *humble* to *exalt* her, and make her *stoop* that she may *conquer*.

If she reproaches you with cruelty, merely explain to her that it has proceeded from *rooted* affection; and if she had suffered

suffered martyrdom in the cause, yet, for the motive sake, she would not only forgive, but love you the better, for having inflicted the punishment.—It is always so, when we give the women leave to date our errors from their own list of captivating attractions: perhaps, at first, she may give you a little trouble in hushing her sobs, and drying her tears; regard them not as symptoms of disfavour—the very best of females love the ostentation of grief, and think it a sort of virtue to wear the livery of affliction.

This is the very last time you must expect to hear from me, till I am honoured with your Lordship's notice; *three* letters is debt enough even from an *Earl* to a *Commoner*. I shall not increase your obligation, by adding another to the number: in truth, dear Auberry, though mortified, I am not angry; being now, and at all times, your faithful and affectionate servant,

ASHTON MONTAGUE.

LETTER

LETTER XLVI.

Lady Auberry to Lady Jane Petworth.

May 1, 17—

I HAVE heard of professional men, so tender-hearted, as to faint in the performance of an operation, and who even give up practice rather than amputate a limb. Such timid practitioners may be their *own* friends, but they certainly are not the *friends* of society. What would become of all the diseased, if those who *could* give them relief were to run away, leaving them to perish, rather than stay and face the momentary pain that must precede the cure.

I have

I have heard of friends too, who, in the hour of trouble, will pass by the door of the unfortunate; because, forsooth, they cannot bear to see those they love in any sort of distress: how little do all these tender-hearted people consider the inhumanity that lurks under this erroneous mask of sympathy!

You will ask me, What is the meaning of all this preamble?—I mean it as a sort of tribute to that true spirit of sensibility, that blessed philanthropy, which distinguishes my *best* friend, and the best friend of my gentle Mary.

The time is come, when I call upon you to amputate from her mind all the gay expectations that have hitherto grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength; the incision once made, I appoint you to pour on her bleeding wounds the balsam of kindness, the oil of comfort, and the honey of friendship—it is by this regimen alone that the gangrene of mortification can be prevented.

I have

I have done something for the dear child myself in this way, which I know will contribute to her pacification. I inclose my letter, that you might deliver it to her, when you think it good time.

Solemn, the polished abetter of all this mischief, the agent of *plunderers* and *depredators*, has been down again, and wanted a second interview with me. I wonder what my heart was about, that it gave me no scratches, when he came here the first time.

Before his return I made up my mind to my grievances; there was no foundation for contention, and I resolved to submit my cause to Heaven, yielding quietly to the demands of a traitorous conspiracy; and my attorney was instructed accordingly, when I sent him to meet Mr. Solemn, choosing to give up my claim to the honour of his personal attendance on myself.

They were some hours together, and the result of their meeting was, that the
Montague

Montague estates were resigned to Sir Ashton, and all her mother's money, which is funded in the Bank, transferred to Lord Auberry.

I have heard a story of an old lady being stopped by highwaymen, who, well pleased with the contents of her purse, demanded no more: but when they were out of sight, remembering she had on her finger a ring of value, which escaped their observation, a footman was dispatched after the plunderers, that she might have the pleasure of presenting it to them.

I did very like it, only that mine was an act of deliberation; her's of confusion—their agent would have made, in the name of his employers, a sort of compromise, respecting the arrears; but my soul spurned at the thoughts of any thing like a negotiation with barbarians; and when my own lawyer brought me the proposal, I sent him back again to insist on their taking the whole.

There

There is one thing that I have not yet set before you—the wretch, who is starving, will pick up scraps from the dung-hill; so I pick up some poor comfort in this *last* unwholesome morsel, which I now invite you to partake with me.

The greatest trouble I have known in my short torturing trial, since the confederacy has been revealed to me, proceeded from that part of it, which I thought must inevitably stigmatize the reputation of my angel daughter; however, it has pleased God to put it into the heads of our ruffian persecutors, to say that Mary is not allied to them, or to me, but is an imposture, who, I have reared up to cheat my husband's family.

These were not exactly the words in which the insinuating Mr. Solemn advanced the pretty fabricated tale; yet the meaning is what I tell you.

So it seems I am nothing to Mary; it is a comical idea, that I should be nothing to Mary Montague.—Wretches! I defy

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them

them to take from us our *honour*, our *peace*, our *affection*, or our *relationship*. I have already told you, and it is true, I am more consoled than afflicted, at this new manœuvre:—my Daughter's name escapes unfullied, and my Grand-daughter is not less my Grand-daughter; because they, whose breath would raise a blister on the face of truth, *say* that *she* is not. .

Mr. Solemn seems never to be off his guard, or I should have supposed it an unguarded declaration, when he averred to Harvey, there were proofs that Miss Montague was not the daughter of Lady Mary.—He called these proofs, I think, a *statement of facts*; which statement of facts was lodged in his hands, and properly authenticated. Alas! poor Truth, where art thou all this time, that so many sort of facts are made out without thy signature?—There can be little doubt, comparing the cottage adventure with this circumstance of proofs in their possession, how these proofs were obtained?—Well, God forgive

give them, I do not pray for their happiness in this world; punishment must come, and sure it is better to wish it may be transient than eternal—write to me soon, I beseech you; and tell me how that dear lamb, *who is nothing to me*, supports the intelligence you have to communicate:—break it, if you please, to the Dukes; but it would be cruel to disturb the Duke with it till he gets better; they are wonderfully good to my darling, and, as long as she can be of use to them, I will not indulge my fondness, at the expence of her gratitude and my own. God bless you, my dear, kind friend, I have no great fortitude of my *own*, but much has been graciously added to my little store on this trying occasion.

Though I no longer abound in riches, I am well—thankful—not unhappy—in health tolerable; and your's, most affectionately,

M. AUBERRY.

P. S.

P. S. Your dear Niece writes to you; I say nothing of her, because I do not know how to tell you half her goodness to me, or half my fondness for her.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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